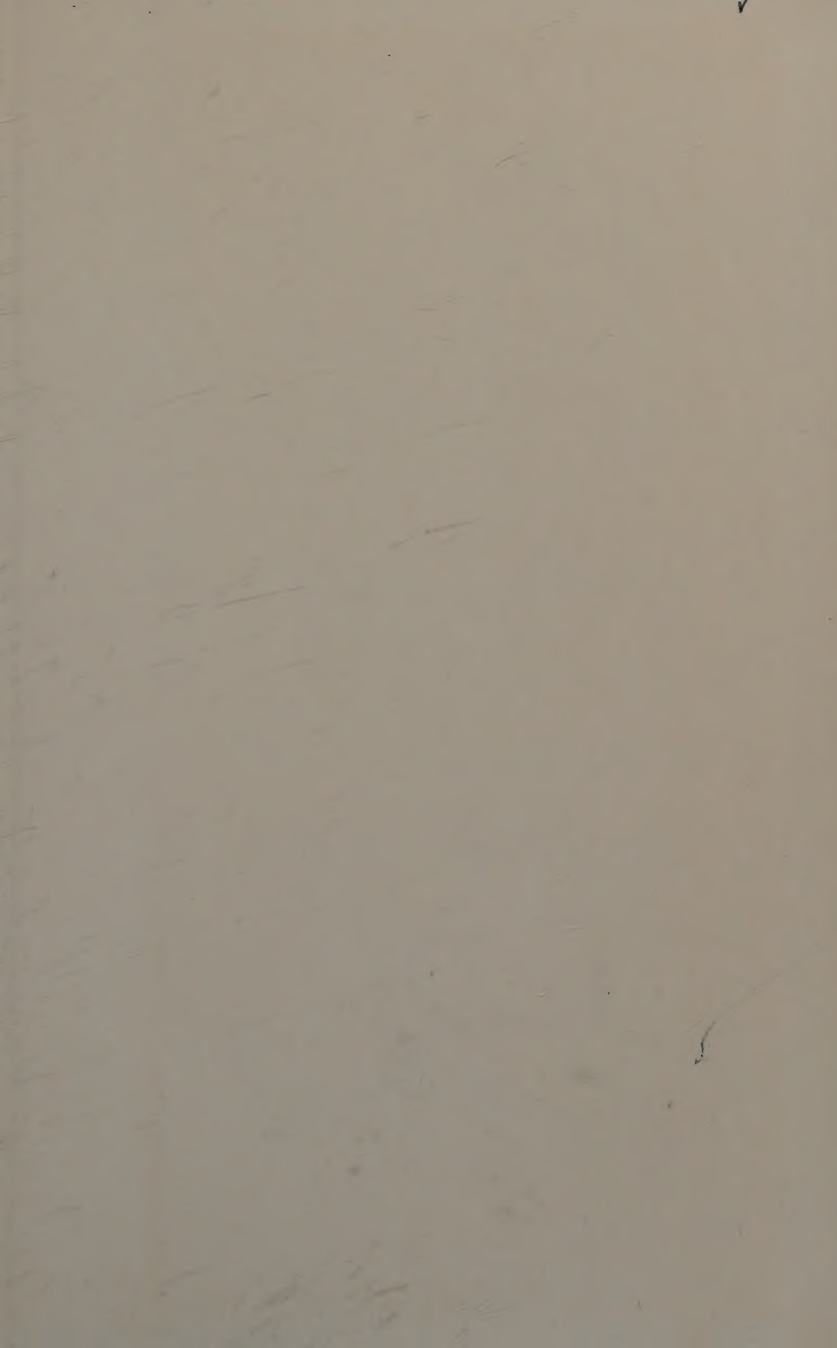






YOUNG DAVID RESCUING THE LAMB

Old Testament Stories *for* Little Children

By
LAURA ELLA CRAGIN
Author of "Kindergarten Bible Stories," etc.



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IN UNIFORM STYLE

Fourth Edition

Kindergarten Bible Stories

The Old Testament Adapted for
Little Children

By

LAURA ELLA CRAGIN

"An admirable book in every way.
The writer has read many of the
stories to his own children, and they
have been received with delight.
We commend the book to mothers
and to the teachers of little children."

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*To my Sister,
whose help and sympathy are
a continual source of encour-
agement and inspiration to me,
this book is lovingly dedicated*

Preface

ON the walls of a room in the Boston Public Library, Edwin A. Abbey has portrayed, with great beauty of design and colouring, the story of Sir Galahad. In the first picture the little child, lifted high in the arms of a nun, stretches eager hands towards the shining Grail, which an angel holds. Though the Grail itself is not visible, the marvellous radiance that streams from it so enkindles the imagination and awakens the enthusiasm of Galahad that through many vicissitudes and dangers he follows the quest. In the last picture of the series, he kneels before the revelation which is granted only to the highest knightly purity. His crown, sceptre and robe fall from him, as, with illumined face, he gazes in rapture upon the uncovered Grail.

As I study these wonderful paintings, it seems to me that they contain a lesson for us who are mothers or teachers of little children. To us is given the responsibility and the joy of presenting ideals to the little ones in such a way as to stimulate their imagination and arouse their will, so that they may desire to attain all that is best in life. And I know of no better way of presenting

such ideals than through stories of these grand old Bible characters.

Some of them I portrayed in my first book of Old Testament stories and it was my purpose to write this book, as I did that, for children of the kindergarten age. But I found that so many of the stories would have to be omitted (as they contained incidents which it seems to me unwise to give to the little ones) that I decided to write this book for older children.

With the thought of the children in my mind, it has been both a delight and an inspiration to study these great characters. In endeavouring to portray them so that they will seem real and human, they have become more so to me and I feel that my own life is richer because of this close and intimate contact with them. What wonderful ideals of strength and heroism, of friendship and love, of faith and trust do they give us! How the prayers of Hezekiah, of Jehoshaphat and of Elijah take us into God's very presence and reveal the faith which could remove mountains and conquer even death itself.

Some of these characters are flawless gems: Jonathan, with his heroism, his filial respect and obedience, and his wonderful devotion to the friend who was to supplant him; Esther, with her loving obedience to the one who had been as a father to her, and her loyal devotion to her people, which led her to risk even life itself to

save them ; Daniel, with his fine statesmanship and unswerving loyalty to God, which even threats of a terrible death could not shake ; and Samuel, dedicated to the Lord from his birth, upon whose strength and faith a whole nation leaned, and whose high integrity and perfect justice were acknowledged by all, at the close of his life.

Other characters show weakness as well as strength : David, a hero from his youth, who was quickly aroused to anger, and yet who showed such self-control that he twice spared the life of Saul, his bitter enemy ; and in whose later life, also, failure and sin are seen struggling with righteousness. Yet because he struggled, because he repented, he was called by God a man of perfect heart. And Elijah, who, in spite of his faith and loyalty to God and his dauntless courage which enabled him to stand alone against a whole nation, had his hour of discouragement and depression. Such characters as these will, I hope, help the children to feel that with effort they, also, may overcome.

Of Elisha, whose life was filled with deeds of kindness ; of the sweet Shunammite, with her hospitality and faith ; and of Nehemiah, with his love of country and trust in God, I must not speak here at greater length.

It has been a joy to me to watch the eager interest of the children as I told them these stories.

And if now I may share them with a wider circle and lead others to count these great characters among their friends and ideals, I shall have accomplished my purpose.

I have used, whenever possible, the Bible words, not only because they are better than any other words could be, but also because I believe that by becoming familiar with them, the children will take more interest in reading these stories later in the Bible.

I am glad to be able to suggest so many beautiful illustrations, in addition to those given in the book, and I think that mothers, as well as teachers, will find that it will add to the children's enjoyment if they show them, as they tell or read these stories. Unless otherwise specified, they are all from the Wilde collection.¹

It is impossible to give credit to all the authors from whose books I have obtained help, when so many have been consulted, but I wish to acknowledge my especial indebtedness to "The Expositor's Bible," and to "The Cambridge Bible," also to Prof. George L. Robinson's "Leaders of Israel," Frederick William Krummacher's "David, King of Israel," Rev. Charles E. Knox's "David the King," Ederheim's histories, and the works of W. M. Taylor, Cunningham Geike, and F. W. Farrar.

¹ W. A. Wilde Company, 120 Boylston Street, Boston, and 328 Wabash Avenue, Chicago.

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I

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

1 Samuel i; ii: 1-11, 18-21

Picture—CHILD SAMUEL PRESENTED TO ELI.—

J. Opie

STORY

LONG, long ago, in a little town called Ramah, set high among the hills, in a country far from here, there lived a man, named Elkanah, with his two wives. Now it is right for a man to have only one wife but in those days men sometimes had two or more. One of Elkanah's wives, Peninah, had many children, both sons and daughters, but to the other, Hannah, God had given no little ones. At that time every wife longed for children, not only because she loved them as mothers do now, but also because it was thought to be a great misfortune and even a disgrace if she did not have them. People would pity her or, if they were unkind and cruel, they would even laugh at her and make fun of her if she had no little ones. Poor Hannah had a sad hard life, for Peninah was a mean and cruel woman. Instead of feeling sorry for Hannah, she laughed at her and said unkind things to her.

Every year Elkanah and all his family went to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was, to worship God. It was hard for Hannah to endure Peninah's cruel treatment at home but it was even harder on this journey when others were near them and could hear the unkind things she said. When they reached Shiloh, Elkanah worshipped and gave offerings as God had commanded. Then he and his family had a feast, or dinner, together. He loved Hannah dearly and he was very sorry for her, so he gave her the nicest things on the table, even nicer than those he gave to Peninah and her children. But though Hannah was grateful to her husband for his kindness, she was so unhappy that she could not eat. Then Elkanah said: "Why do you weep, Hannah, and why are you so sad? Am I not better than ten sons?"

Poor Hannah could not answer, but as soon as the dinner was over, she slipped away to the Tabernacle. Here she begged God to give her a little boy and she promised Him that, if He would give her a son, she would bring him to the Tabernacle where he might serve God all his life. She did not pray aloud, for she wanted no one to hear her except the dear heavenly Father. The old priest, or minister, Eli, sat near the Tabernacle and when he saw Hannah and noticed that her lips were moving, though no words came from them, he thought she had taken too much



CHILD SAMUEL PRESENTED TO ELI

wine. He spoke harshly to her: "Why did you drink so much? Put away your wine."

It must have been very hard for poor Hannah not only to have Peninah so cruel to her but to have even God's priest speak unkindly. But she was very meek and gentle, so she replied: "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit" (that means "I am very sad"). "I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink but have poured out my soul before the Lord" (that is, "I have told the Lord all my sorrow"). "Do not think," she continued, "that I am a bad woman, for it is because I am in such great trouble that I have come here to pray to God."

When Eli heard her words, he was very sorry that he had spoken unkindly to her and he said: "Go in peace and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him" (that is, "May God answer your prayer").

Then Hannah was very happy for she was sure she would have the desire of her heart. She returned to her family and I know that her husband was glad when he saw her bright face. The next day, after they had again worshipped God, Elkanah and his family returned to their home.

Some time after this God did answer Hannah's prayer and gave her a dear little baby. Her joy was so great that I cannot describe it. Now people could no longer laugh at her and say un-

kind things about her because at last she was a happy mother. She wanted even her little boy's name to remind her of God's goodness to her, so she called him Samuel, which means "asked of God."

When it came time for the family to go again to Shiloh to worship, Hannah told her husband that she would not go with them. She wished to wait until she could take her little son with her and then she would give him to the Lord. Elkanah replied: "Do as you think best. Wait until he is older and then may God help you to do as you have promised."

When Samuel was old enough to be separated from his mother, she took him to Shiloh and there she and her husband worshipped God. Then, leading her little son to Eli, Hannah said: "Oh, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed and the Lord hath given me the petition which I asked of Him" (that means "God has answered my prayer"). "Now I will give him to the Lord: as long as he lives, he shall be the Lord's."

Then she prayed again to God and her prayer is one of the most beautiful in the whole Bible. It makes one think of that other beautiful prayer which Mary, another happy mother, offered when the Christ Child came to her. Hannah rejoiced, in her prayer, because God was so strong and

powerful. She said that God made people rich or poor, He helped those in trouble and punished the wicked, for the whole world belonged to Him. She told also of her great joy because He had been so good to her.

It must have been hard for Hannah to say good-bye to her dear little son, but I know she was glad that she had so precious a gift to give to the Lord. But in her own home she thought often of her little boy and the next year, when she went back to the Tabernacle, she took him a little coat which she had made for him. How happy she must have been to see him again and to feel his loving little arms about her neck.

Samuel had been so dear and good that Eli, too, loved him very much. The little fellow could run on errands for Eli and help in other ways and he was always willing and obedient and tried to please the old priest.

When Elkanah and Hannah came for Eli's blessing, he asked God to give them other children because they had given their little son to Him. God answered this prayer, also, and gave Hannah three sons and two daughters. What a happy woman she must have been! I am sure she thanked God every day for His great goodness to her.

II

THE CHILD SAMUEL

1 Samuel ii : 12, 18, 19, 26 ; iii : 1-18

Picture—SAMUEL.—*Sir Joshua Reynolds*

STORY

BEFORE telling you more of Samuel, I must tell you something very sad about Eli, the priest. Though he, himself, was a good man and had loved God and tried to obey Him, he had not been a good father. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were very wicked and though Eli had talked to them and reproved them, he had not punished them and made them do what was right. Instead of helping the people to obey God's laws, these bad young men had taught them to sin in different ways. God sent a messenger to Eli to tell him how wrong it had been for him to allow his sons to do all these dreadful things, but still the old priest did not punish them.

Meantime Samuel had been growing older and the Bible tells us that he was in favour both with the Lord and also with men (that means that what he did pleased God and made every one love him). I am sure it must have been a great

comfort to old Eli to have this dear boy near him, especially as his own sons gave him such sorrow.

Every year Samuel's mother and father came to the Tabernacle to worship and oh, how glad he must have been to see them! Each time they came Hannah brought him a little coat, as she had done the first year, and I am sure it gave her joy to make it for him. How happy and proud she must have been to find him growing more loving and thoughtful, more strong and manly every year.

Now I want to tell you of something that happened when Samuel was about twelve years of age. Eli was now so old that he was growing blind, so Samuel waited upon him more and more. He never went far from God's house, even sleeping in a building close to the Tabernacle, and Samuel slept near him. One night the little boy was awakened by a voice calling, "Samuel." He answered, "Here am I," for in those days, instead of saying, "Yes, papa," or "Yes, mamma," children would say, "Here am I."

Samuel jumped out of bed and ran quickly to Eli and said, "Here am I; for you called me."

But Eli replied, "I called not; lie down again."

So Samuel went back to his bed and lay down. But again he heard the call, "Samuel." And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here am I; for you called me."

But Eli answered, "I called not, my son; lie down again."

A third time the little boy heard the voice, "Samuel." And once more he went to Eli and said, "Here am I; for you did call me."

Then Eli knew that God must have spoken to the child, so he said, "Go, lie down: and if you hear the voice again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'"

So Samuel went and lay down in his bed. Then the Lord came and called as He had before, "Samuel, Samuel." And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Thy servant heareth."

Then the Lord told him of the wickedness of Eli's sons and said that because they had sinned so dreadfully, they must die, and because Eli had not made them do right, he, too, should suffer. How sad Samuel must have been to have heard that such grief was to come to Eli, whom he loved like a father. He lay still until morning and then he did not go to the old priest as usual because he could not bear to tell him of the trouble that was coming to him. He arose and opened the doors of the Tabernacle and did his other duties. But when Eli heard him moving about, he called him, "Samuel, my son."

And the little boy answered, "Here am I."

Then Eli commanded him to tell him everything that the Lord had said and so Samuel sadly told him every word. Poor old Eli was

almost broken-hearted when he heard that this dreadful punishment was to come to him, but he bowed his head and said, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good" (that is, "Whatever the Lord does will be right").

III

THE ARK CAPTURED AND RESTORED

1 Samuel iv ; v ; vi : 1-16

Picture—THE RETURN OF THE ARK.—*Doré*

STORY

SOME years after God had spoken to Samuel, telling him of the dreadful punishment that would come upon Eli and his sons, the Israelites went out to fight against their enemies, the Philistines. These people lived near the Israelites and there was always trouble between them. In this battle the Philistines were the stronger, so they defeated the Israelites and put many of them to death. The rest of the army returned to the camp and there the elders, or leaders, asked, "Why has God allowed the Philistines to win this battle?"

But instead of praying to God to help them, they, themselves, thought of a plan. They decided to take the ark with them into battle, feeling sure that it would help them to win. You remember that this ark was a chest, or box, of gold, which God had commanded should be placed in the Tabernacle. There were two golden angels above it and a bright cloud, which showed God's glory, rested upon it. In it were

The Ark Captured and Restored 25

kept the ten commandments which told God's people what He wished them to do, and into the holy place where the ark was kept, only the High Priest could enter once a year. You can see how wrong it was for the people to think of taking this holy ark into battle with them. Perhaps they remembered the time when the ark was carried by the priests around the city of Jericho for seven days and at last the walls fell down and the Israelites entered and took the city. But then God had told Joshua to have the ark carried in this way and now He had given no such command.

Still the elders felt sure that the ark would help them to win a victory, so they sent for it and Hophni and Phinehas, the two wicked sons of Eli, brought it to the camp. When the Israelites saw the ark they shouted for joy so that the earth rang. The Philistines heard their shouts and asked: "What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?" (This was another name for God's people.)

And they learned that the ark had been brought to the camp. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said: "God is come into the camp. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of this mighty God? This is the God that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues."

You remember the frogs and flies, the locusts, the terrible storm and the sickness and death which God had sent upon the Egyptians because their king would not let the Israelites go away with Moses. Even the Philistines had heard of these awful plagues, so it was no wonder that they were frightened. But in spite of all they determined to fight bravely, so they said to each other: "Be strong and quit yourselves like men" (or be brave men), "O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men and fight."

Those of the Israelites whom the Philistines had taken alive in battle they had made slaves, or servants, and they knew they might have to be slaves of the Israelites if they were defeated, so they urged each other to be strong and brave. They did indeed fight bravely and the Israelites were terribly defeated. A great many were killed and among them Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, and, worst of all, the ark of the Lord was taken by the Philistines. God punished His people because they had not obeyed Him and because they had taken the ark without His command.

When these dreadful things happened in the battle, a messenger ran back to Shiloh to carry the news. He had torn his clothes and put dirt upon his head as people did in those days to show great grief. Ah! how eagerly the people

The Ark Captured and Restored 27

had been waiting for news, but when they heard the dreadful tidings this messenger had brought, they cried aloud in their grief.

Eli was sitting near the gate, sad and anxious, for he knew that the ark should not have been taken into the battle. He was an old, old man of ninety-eight years and quite blind. When he heard the great cry of the people, he asked what it meant. The messenger came to him and said, "I came from the army to-day."

"What is done there, my son?" asked Eli.

And the messenger answered: "Israel is fled before the Philistines and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people" (that means a great many have been killed); "your two sons, also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead and the ark of God is taken."

Poor old Eli! To hear one dreadful piece of news after another was more than he could bear and when the last and worst was told him, that the ark was taken, he fell from his chair and died.

The Philistines were very proud of their victory and they carried the ark to one of their temples, or churches, erected to Dagon in the city of Ashdod. They worshipped idols, or images, which they had made and this Dagon had the head and hands of a man and the body of a fish. Is it not strange that any one could have believed such a thing could help him? It

was just the same as if you should think that your doll or your Teddy bear could take care of you.

The next morning, when the Philistines went to their temple, they found that Dagon had fallen to the floor and lay there before the ark. But they thought it was only an accident, so they picked the image up and set it in its place again. The second^d morning they found Dagon had fallen again and this time its head and its hands were broken off! Then they were sure that the God of the Israelites was punishing them but still they would not return the ark. Then the Lord sent mice into their fields in such quantities that the corn and other grains were all eaten up and He made the people ill with a dreadful sickness from which many died. The men of Ashdod said, "The ark of the God of Israel shall not stay with us."

So the lords, or chief men, of the Philistines decided to send it to another city called Gath. But here, also, the mice destroyed the fields and the same sickness killed the people. Then the ark was sent to another city, though the people of that place, Ekron, begged that it should not remain with them. And once more death and destruction followed.

Then the Philistines asked their priests, or wise men, what they should do and it was decided to send the ark back to Israel. But they

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said, "We will see if these troubles have really come to us from the God of Israel. We will put the ark on a new wagon and harness to it two cows which have never drawn anything before." (In those days they used oxen or cows instead of horses to pull their heavy loads.) "We will take two cows," they said, "which have young calves, and if they draw the wagon towards the country of the Israelites, instead of returning to their calves, we shall know that the God of Israel sent the plagues."

The priests advised that presents should be sent with the ark, golden mice and other offerings of gold, because they had sinned in taking the ark. The Philistines did as the priests advised. They put the ark and the golden mice on a new wagon, harnessed the cows and shut up the little calves in their barns, and then they watched to see what would happen. The cows started at once towards the country of Israel, lowing as they went because they wanted to stay with their little calves. The lords of the Philistines followed to see that the ark was carried safely.

Across the plain and over the hills went the cows until they came to Bath-shemesh, the nearest city of the Israelites. The people of that city were working in their fields that summer afternoon—the men reaping the wheat and the women and children gleaning and gathering

the grain into bundles. Suddenly some one looked up and saw the procession coming slowly over the hills, the cows drawing the wagon and followed by the Philistines. At first the people were frightened, for they thought that their enemies had come to attack them, but when they saw the ark of the Lord, they broke into shouts of joy. For seven months it had been in the hands of their foes and now when they saw it returned to them, they felt that God would again bless them. The Philistines watched until the ark had safely reached the Israelites and then they returned to their homes, feeling sure that all their troubles had come to them because they had dared to carry away the ark of God.

IV

SAMUEL, THE JUDGE

1 Samuel iii : 19-21 ; vii ; viii

STORY

AFTER God had spoken to him in the night, the Bible tells us that Samuel grew and the Lord was with him. Isn't that the very best thing that could be said of any one? We know that God was with the great men of whom the Bible tells us—Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon and others—and this is what made them brave and strong. After that first time God spoke often to Samuel and all the people of Israel knew that he was the prophet, or minister, of the Lord, because what he told them always came true.

The Israelites no longer worshipped God in Shiloh because the Philistines had taken that city and the ark was now in a private house. Indeed God's people often bowed down to the idols, or images, worshipped by the heathen who did not know God. Samuel tried to lead them to do what was right but they would not listen to him. They were really slaves of the Philistines at this time; their lives were hard and sad and they thought that God had forgotten them.

After many years had passed Samuel called the people together and told them that if they would put away the idols they had been worshipping and serve God alone, he would pray that they might be delivered from the Philistines. The people felt very sorry that they had been so wicked in worshipping the idols of the heathen and they promised to love and obey God.

When the Philistines saw this gathering of the people, they thought that the Israelites were going to fight them, so they marched against God's people. The Israelites were much frightened, for they were not prepared to fight, and they begged Samuel to pray to God to save them from their enemies. The Lord heard Samuel's prayer and when the Philistines drew near, He sent a terrific thunder-storm which so frightened them that they fled in terror. The Israelites ran after them and killed many, so the Philistines came no more into the land of Israel for many years.

Then Samuel took a great stone and placed it where God had overcome the Philistines and called it Eben-ezer, which means, "Hitherto" (or up to this time) "the Lord hath helped us." This was the very place where, years before, the Philistines had so terribly defeated the Israelites and carried away the ark, and Samuel wished the people to remember, whenever they saw the stone, that when they trusted in God and tried to

obey Him, He always helped them. Many of the cities which the Philistines had taken were given back to the Israelites and they must have been very glad and thankful that they need no longer serve their enemies.

Samuel judged Israel, that means when they did not know what was right and best to do, he decided for them. He travelled from city to city, so he could help all the people; he was always kind and just and, best of all, he helped them to love and serve the dear heavenly Father.

He gathered the young men into schools in different places and there they studied about God and sang praises to Him. These schools were called the schools of the prophets. Samuel taught these young men and he was so kind and loving that he seemed like a father to them.

After his travels, Samuel returned to Ramah, his birthplace, where he had his home. Here he made an altar where he could worship God with his family and with others who came to praise God with him. The Israelites were at peace with the Philistines and other nations and they had happy lives now that they served and obeyed God.

But as the years went by, Samuel grew too old to travel far and to do as much as he had done in the past, so he made his sons judges that they might help him. But as soon as they were given power, they did not treat the people justly as

Samuel had always done. They wanted to get rich and they made those who came to them for help pay them more money than was right. If two men had a dispute, or quarrel, they would help the one who gave them the most money, even though he might be in the wrong.

At last the elders, or older men, came to Samuel and said: "You are now old and your sons are not just and good as you have always been, so we do not like to have them for our judges: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

Samuel was pained and grieved when the people asked this, for not only did he feel that they turned against him, after all that he had done for them, but he knew that God was their King and they rejected, or turned from, Him in making this request. When Samuel was in trouble, he always went to God, so now he prayed to Him, telling Him what the people wanted. God told Samuel to give them what they wished but to tell them how much suffering a king would bring them and how much better it would be for them if they would have God alone for their King.

Samuel told the people that a king would take their sons to lead his armies and to drive his chariots, to plow his fields and to reap his harvests, and their daughters to cook and bake for him; he would take their fields and their vineyards (where the grapes grew), their cattle and sheep for him-

self and, in many ways, make their lives hard. And when they cried to God in their trouble, He would not answer them because they had chosen a man for a king instead of Himself.

But the people would not listen to Samuel. They said: "Nay, but we *will* have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations." (These other nations did not have God for their King and they were wicked, so it was wrong for the Israelites to wish to be like them.) They said, also, "We desire that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles."

Samuel listened to what the people said and then he repeated their words to the Lord. And God told Samuel to do as they wished and choose them a king, so he sent them back to their homes.

V

SAUL AND THE ASSES

1 Samuel ix : 1-24

STORY

THE Israelites were divided into twelve tribes and the smallest of these was the tribe of Benjamin. In those days there was a man named Kish in this tribe of Benjamin who had both wealth and power. The son of this man was named Saul and he was tall and handsome ; indeed the Bible tells that there was no one better looking than he among all the Israelites. One day Kish learned that his asses were lost and he turned to Saul, his son, and said : " Take one of the servants with you and go seek the asses." (Asses, or mules, were used in the farm work and also to carry people or goods on journeys, so they were of much value.)

Saul knew that he might have to take a long hard journey before he found the missing animals, but he was a good son and always did as his father wished, so, taking a servant with him, he started at once. All that day they searched, going up hill and down, and looking everywhere, but when night came, they had not

found the asses. The next day they went farther, asking all whom they met, but again they were unsuccessful. On the third day they were so far from home that Saul said to his servant: "Come, let us return or my father will think we are lost and then he will be more troubled than he was over the asses."

But a plan occurred to the servant and he answered: "In this city there is a holy man, who is a seer" (that means one who can tell what is to happen) "and everything that he says always comes true. Let us go to him, for perhaps he can tell us which way to go to find the missing animals."

Who do you think this seer, or prophet, was? It was Samuel. It seems strange that Saul had not heard of him. I am afraid neither he nor his father cared very much about God or they would have known of His great prophet. Saul replied to his servant: "But we cannot ask a favour of this man without giving him a present and I have no money. Even the food we brought with us is all gone or we might give him some of that."

His servant answered: "I have a little piece of money which you can give him to tell us our way."

Saul said, "Well, that is a good plan; let us go into the city."

As they climbed the hill, they met some

young girls coming down with their jars to get water from the well at the foot of the hill. You remember that people did not have water in their houses in those days but instead they had to go to the wells to draw it. Saul asked one of these girls, "Is the seer here?"

And she answered: "Yes, he is just ahead of you, but you must hasten for he is going with the people to the top of the hill to worship God and then there is to be a feast" (or great dinner).

Saul and his servant hastened up the hill and as they were about to enter the city, they saw Samuel. The day before this, God had told Samuel that he would meet the man who was to be the king, the next day, so when he saw Saul, the Lord told him that this was the man. But Saul did not know Samuel, so, when they met, he said to him, "Tell me, I pray, where the seer's house is."

And Samuel answered: "I am the seer: go with me now to the high place, for I wish you to take dinner with me to-day and to-morrow I will tell you all that you wish to know." Then he added: "Do not be anxious about the asses which were lost three days ago, for they have been found. And whom do all Israel regard most highly" (or of whom do they think the most); "is it not you and your father's house? And even if the asses had not been found, it

would not have mattered, for are not all the best things in Israel to belong to you?"

How surprised Saul must have been not only to find that the prophet knew all about him and the lost asses but also to have him speak thus of him and his father's family! He answered: "But I am from Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, and my father is not well known. Why should the people think so highly of us and why should the best things come to us?"

Samuel did not reply then but he made Saul go ahead of him, which was a mark of honour, and when they came to the house where the dinner was to be given, he gave Saul the best place at the table. Then he turned to the cook and said, "Bring the portion" (or part of the meat) "of which I spoke to you."

The cook brought in the best part of the meat and placed it before Saul and Samuel said, "I gave orders to save this for you when I invited the people to the dinner."

Saul must have been more and more astonished to find he had been expected at this dinner and to be so honoured by the prophet. There were about thirty other guests and I am sure they wondered who this stranger was to whom Samuel showed such attention.

VI

THE ANOINTING OF SAUL

1 Samuel ix : 25-27 ; x : 1-16

Picture—SAMUEL ANOINTING SAUL.—*Julius von Schnorr*

STORY

WHEN the dinner was over, Samuel took Saul to his own home and they went up on the roof of the house. In that country the flat roofs were often used when people wished to be alone. They sometimes slept there also, as it was the most comfortable place when the weather was warm.

When they were alone, Samuel and Saul had a long talk together. I think the old prophet (for Samuel was now quite an old man) told Saul of God's dealings with His people. He spoke of Abraham, Moses, Joseph and others, and of God's help to them. Then he showed Saul how the Israelites had prospered and had had happy times when they obeyed God, but whenever they did wrong and forgot the heavenly Father, their enemies had defeated them and their lives were miserable.

"Now," he said, "they desire a king and if that king is a good man and helps the people to

obey God, then he can overcome the Philistines who are troubling Israel and all will be well. But if he is a bad man, thinking only of himself and of what he wants to do and forgetting God, then the people will still have trouble and God will choose another king for them."

After their talk together, Samuel left Saul to sleep on the roof, which, as I have said, was the pleasantest place, but early the next morning he called him, saying, "Arise, for you must start upon your journey."

When Saul was ready, Samuel went with him and as they came to a quiet place just outside the city, the prophet said, "Bid your servant go on ahead, for I wish to speak with you alone."

When the servant was out of sight, Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it upon Saul's head. Then he kissed him, a mark of honour which in those days was shown to kings, and said, "The Lord anoints you to be king over His people."

How astonished Saul must have been! Perhaps he answered: "But who am I that this great honour should come to me? I am only a young man and surely one more worthy" (or better) "than I should be chosen."

But Samuel replied: "No, God has chosen you and these are the signs" (or this is the way) "that you may know that He wishes you to be king. As you go on your journey, you shall

meet two men who will say to you, 'The asses you went to seek are found and now your father is anxious because he thinks you are lost. He is saying, "What shall I do for my son?"'

"Then as you go on farther you will meet three men going up to worship God, one carrying three kids" (or young goats), "another carrying three loaves of bread and the third, a bottle of wine. They intended to give all of these to God but when they meet you, they will give you two loaves, which you must take.

"Later you will come to a city where you will meet some prophets" (the young men who had been to the schools Samuel had started). "They will be coming down from a high place where they have been worshipping God. They will have a harp, a pipe and other musical instruments and will be singing and praising God. When you meet them, you will join them and sing and praise God with them for you will feel like a different man. When all these things happen, of which I have told you, you will know that God is with you and that He wishes you to be king."

Perhaps it was hard for Samuel to feel that another man was now to take his place in leading and directing God's people. But he did just as God told him to do and helped Saul all he could.

When Saul had left Samuel, God gave him another heart and as what the prophet had told him all came true, he felt sure God did indeed wish

him to be king. First he met the two men who told him that the asses had been found and that his father was now anxious about him. Next he met the men going up to worship, with the kids, the loaves of bread and the bottle of wine, and they gave him two of the loaves which was a mark of great honour.

Then he met the young prophets singing and praising God and he felt that he wished to join them. He thought how good God was to choose him to be king—the first king the Israelites had had. He knew that this was the highest honour that could come to him and to show his gratitude to God, he began to sing with the others.

He was now near his own home and as his neighbours saw him singing and praising God, they were greatly surprised, for he had never done this before. They exclaimed: "Is not this the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

He went up to the high place to worship and there he met his uncle who asked, "Where have you been?"

Saul replied: "To seek the asses, and when we could not find them, we went to the prophet Samuel to ask him to help us."

And his uncle asked, "What did Samuel say to you?"

"He told us that the asses were found," Saul replied.

But he did not tell his uncle that Samuel had said he was to be king. He knew that for a time that was to be a secret between the prophet and himself.

VII

SAUL CHOSEN KING

1 Samuel x : 17-27

STORY

WHEN the people came to Samuel and told him that they wished to have a king, you remember that the Lord said that He would allow them to have one. Then the prophet met Saul and secretly anointed him. But he now wished to have the Israelites know that Saul was to be their king. He therefore called all the people together at Mizpah, the place where some years before they had had the great victory over the Philistines. Then he told them of God's great goodness in bringing them out of Egypt where they were so cruelly treated, in leading them into this beautiful land and in helping them to conquer their enemies. But instead of having God alone for their Ruler, they wanted a king like the other nations.

Samuel said that they might now cast lots and God would show them which man to choose, so first the tribes came before the prophet and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then the families came and Kish was chosen and at last the lot fell upon Saul.

But when they looked for him he could not

be found. As the people did not know what to do, they asked God and the answer came that Saul had hidden among the baggage. Perhaps Saul was afraid that he was neither great nor good enough to lead God's people and he thought that if he were not found when the lot was cast for him, the Israelites would choose a better man. But when Samuel had told him that God wished him to be king, he need not have been afraid. He might have known that if he asked for help, the heavenly Father would surely give him the strength he needed.

When the people learned where Saul was hiding, they sent messengers to look for him and he was found among the baggage which those who lived at a distance had brought with them. As he came among the people, they saw that he was a whole head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, "See the man whom God hath chosen; there is none like him!"

How noble it was of Samuel to praise Saul thus, instead of being jealous and angry because the Israelites wished another man to take his own place. The people were greatly pleased with this tall, fine-looking man and they all shouted, "God save the king! God save the king!" just as people do now when they have a new king.

Then Samuel told Saul and the people what

the king must do. He was not to get a great deal of money as other kings did. He was to study God's laws and try to obey them and he was to help the people do right. If he did these things, he would have a long and happy reign (that means he would be king for a long time). After their king had been thus chosen, Samuel sent the people to their homes.

Saul also went back to his home and a number of Israelites who were glad he was their king went with him. They brought him presents, thus showing him honour, and were ready to help him whenever he needed them. There were others, however, who did not wish him to be their ruler. They brought him no gifts and they cried out rudely, "How shall *this* man save us?"

Do you think that Saul was angry at such treatment and that he asked his friends to help him fight these men? No, the Bible tells us that he held his peace, which means that he said nothing. It is often hard to keep still, is it not? When some one speaks rudely to us, it is much easier to reply in an angry way than to say nothing. I think Saul decided that instead of answering these men, it would be better to do some brave thing which would show them that he was the right man to be their king. And a little later he had a chance to prove how strong and brave he really was.

VIII

SAUL, THE SOLDIER

1 Samuel xi ; xii

STORY

THE Philistines were not the only enemies who troubled the Israelites. The Ammonites, also, were often at war with them. A short time after the lot had been cast which made Saul king, Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, marched against one of the most important cities of Israel, Jabesh-gilead. As the great army passed through the country, the soldiers burned the villages, or small towns, and destroyed the fields of grain. And when they reached Jabesh, which stood on a high hill, they surrounded it, so no food could be brought into the city.

At last, when there was almost nothing left to eat in Jabesh-gilead and the people could fight no longer, they sent messengers to Nahash saying that they would let his army into the city and would be his servants, if he would make peace with them. But Nahash sent back a terrible answer. He said: "I will make peace with you but I will put out the right eye of every one of you, that all Israel may know that

I am stronger than you and have conquered you."

The poor people in Jabesh-gilead felt dreadfully when they received this cruel message, and their chief men asked that they might have a week to see if they could not get help. Nahash was very sure no one would help them, so he said that he would wait seven days before he entered their city.

Messengers were therefore sent out from Jabesh-gilead and when they came to the town where Saul lived, they told the people there the dreadful thing that was to be done to them. The people were so shocked when they heard that Nahash wished to cruelly put out the eyes of those who lived in Jabesh that they wept aloud.

Saul was out in the fields plowing, for he had gone quietly back to his regular work. When he heard the sound of weeping, he hastened to the people to ask what troubled them. When he was told the terrible news, he was very angry and he determined to help the poor people of Jabesh-gilead. He sent their messengers all about the country to tell the Israelites to come quickly to help him fight the Ammonites.

The Israelites came at once—many, many thousands of them—and Saul led them towards Jabesh-gilead. He sent messengers ahead to tell the poor people that he was coming and oh, how

glad and thankful they were! Saul reached the valley which lay just below the city in the very early morning, while it was still dark. There was the large army of the Ammonites sleeping quietly because the soldiers felt sure that no help could come to the city. Saul divided his army into three parts and then from three different sides attacked the Ammonites.

Suddenly awakened from sleep and being confused by the darkness, the Ammonites soon fled in terror. The Israelites pursued them (that means ran after them), killing many of them and driving the rest far away. The men of Jabesh-gilead were very grateful to Saul for the help he had given them and all the Israelites rejoiced because they had so brave a leader. Now they were glad indeed to have Saul for their king, and they wanted to punish those men who had been rude to him, of whom I told you in our last story. But Saul said: "No, the Lord has helped us win a great victory and we will all be glad together to-day."

Soon after this Samuel called the people together that they might worship God and thank Him for helping them overcome their enemies. The Bible tells us that Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly, and indeed they had cause to be very happy. You remember that Samuel had poured oil on Saul's head the first time he met him, thus anointing him king. Now he did

this once more before the people, and they were all pleased to have such a strong, brave man for their ruler.

Then Samuel made his last speech to the people. He told them that he had been their judge for many years and he had always tried to do right. He asked them if he had ever unjustly taken an ox or an ass or even a shoe from any one. "No," they answered, "you have always been honest and just with us."

Then he said that he wished once more to urge them to obey God's commands. The heavenly Father had cared for them and for their fathers, and if they and their king served Him they would be happy and all would go well with them, but if they forgot God, they would have much trouble. He said also that he would always pray for them, and he would help them to do right as long as he lived.

IX

THE HEROISM OF JONATHAN

1 Samuel xiii; xiv: 1-23

STORY

NOW I want to tell you of Saul's son Jonathan, who was one of the bravest and best men of whom the Bible tells us. The Philistines still troubled the Israelites very much and Saul wished to drive them out of the country. He divided his army, keeping two thousand soldiers and giving one thousand to Jonathan, who was a strong, brave young man of about twenty. The Philistines had a small camp on a hill at some distance from the rest of their army and one day Jonathan marched against this camp and killed the soldiers in it. This angered the other Philistines and they at once made ready to fight the Israelites.

Saul sent messengers in all directions to tell the people to come quickly and help him fight the enemy. The Israelites hastened to their king but when they saw how large the army of the Philistines was, they were very much afraid. The Philistines had hundreds of chariots and thousands of horses and the Bible says that their

soldiers were like the sand on the seashore, which means they were so many no one could count them. Instead of staying to help Saul, many of the Israelites hid themselves in caves, in rocks or in the woods, so Saul was left with but a few soldiers.

Another reason why the Israelites were afraid to march against the enemy was that they had no weapons with which to fight. The Philistines had taken away all their swords and spears and had even closed the shops where such things could be made. The Israelites had only clubs, stones or slings, while the Philistines were well armed with swords, spears, and other weapons. Saul took his soldiers into a narrow place where even a few men could keep back many and there he waited. Meanwhile the Philistines sent soldiers out in different directions to burn the villages, or small towns, of the Israelites and to destroy their fields of grain.

One day Jonathan turned to his armour-bearer (the young man who carried his shield, for Saul and Jonathan had both armour and weapons) and said, "Let us go over to the garrison" (or camp) "of the Philistines that is on the other side."

The two young men slipped away from the rest of the army without being seen by any one. Soon they came to a place where there were two great rocks and on the top of one were some soldiers of the Philistines, watching to see that

no one came to their camp which was near. All about the rocks were woods. When Jonathan proposed that they should go to the camp of the Philistines, he said: "It may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (that means, "Perhaps the Lord will help us to defeat the Philistines, for He can win a victory with a few men just as well as with many").

How wonderfully Jonathan trusted in God and how brave he was to think of going against the great army of the Philistines with only his armour-bearer to help him! This young man was very brave also and when Jonathan proposed that they should go over to the Philistines he at once answered: "Do all that is in thine heart: behold, I am with thee" (that means that he was willing to go with him and help him).

Then Jonathan thought of a plan by which they might know whether God would be with them. He said: "We will go to a place where the soldiers of the Philistines can see us. If they call out, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stay where we are. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up: for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand" (that is, "The Lord will help us to overcome them").

So Jonathan and his armour-bearer went out of the woods to a place where the Philistines could see them and the soldiers cried out, "See

the Hebrews" (or Israelites) "are coming out of the holes where they hid themselves."

They thought that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were two of the cowards who had been so afraid of them that they had hidden from them. But they were mistaken, were they not? Then the Philistines called out, "Come up to us and we will show you a thing" (that is, "we will teach you a lesson").

So Jonathan and his armour-bearer climbed up the steep and slippery rock on their hands and feet. It was a very hard thing to do and if they had slipped and fallen, they would have been killed. But at last they reached the top, where only two or three soldiers stood. They may have thought that the young men could never reach the top or that they wanted to make friends with them. But as soon as Jonathan reached the first man, he struck him down with his sword. Another was killed by his armour-bearer. Others came up but they also were killed by Jonathan and his armour-bearer, until twenty were dead.

Then the Philistines began to be afraid. They supposed that the whole army of the Israelites had come to fight them, for they never imagined that two young men would dare to come alone against them. They began to run away and in their terror they struck at each other, mistaking friends for enemies.

Meantime the watchmen of Saul saw the Phi-

listines fighting and they wondered what had happened. Saul commanded to find out who had gone from his army and it was discovered that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing. Then, as Saul looked again, he saw that the Philistines were not only fighting but were running away, so he and his soldiers hastened towards them. Some of the Israelites had been taken prisoners and were with the Philistines and they, too, now fought them. And the men who had been afraid and had hidden in rocks and caves and in the woods, when they heard the trumpets of the Israelites, ran after the enemy. The Philistines were chased far away and the Bible tells us that the Lord saved Israel that day.

The Israelites were very proud of Jonathan and very grateful to him for his bravery in going with his armour-bearer to the camp of the enemy to win for them this great victory.

X

THE DISOBEDIENCE OF SAUL

1 Samuel xiv : 47, 48, 52 ; xv.

Picture—SAUL REJECTED AS KING.—*Julius von Schnorr*

STORY

AFTER the battle with the Philistines, Saul fought against other nations which had been troubling Israel and he had many victories. He had a large army, for whenever he saw a strong man, he took him to be his soldier.

When Saul had been king for some time, Samuel came to him and said that the Lord wished him to fight against the Amalekites. These people were very wicked and they had often troubled Israel. Years before, just after the Israelites had left Egypt, the Amalekites had attacked them. They had come upon them when the poor Israelites were faint and weary from their marching and had fought the weakest ones, who had fallen behind because they were too feeble to go as fast as the others. Many other times had these people done cruel, wicked things and now God wished Saul to punish them. Samuel told Saul that the Lord said he must destroy all those

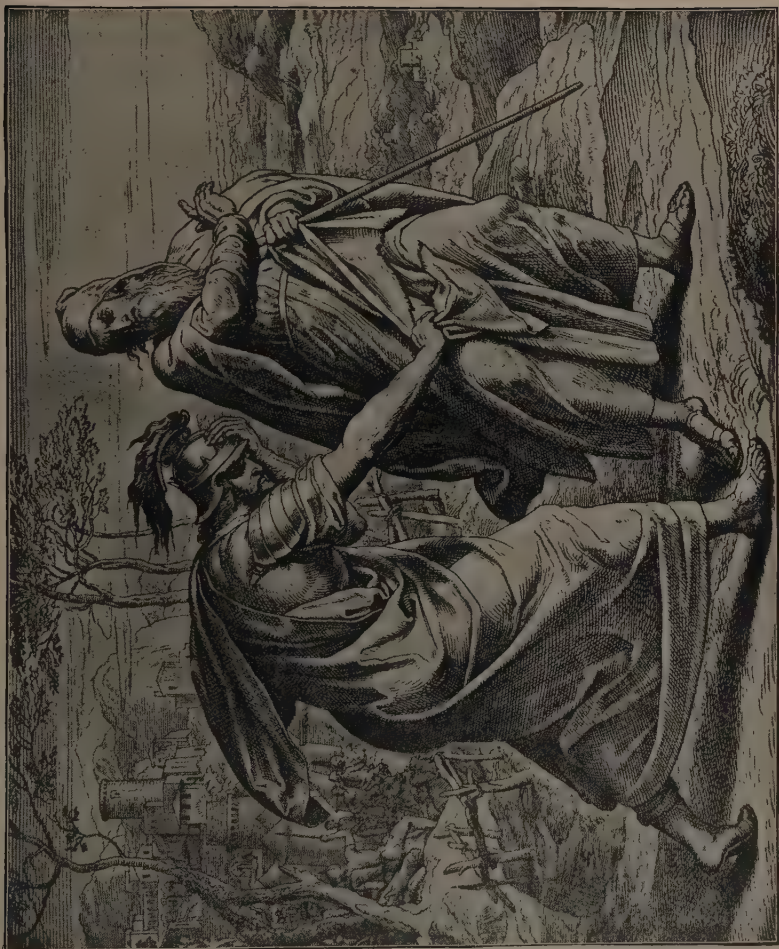
wicked people and everything they had. Nothing was to be taken from them and kept by the Israelites.

Saul gathered all his people together—thousands and thousands of men—and they marched against the Amalekites. The Kenites were another nation who lived among the Amalekites and they had been kind to the Israelites and had helped them. When, therefore, Saul came near the city of Amalek he sent word to the Kenites to go away from the Amalekites, so they should not be hurt. The Kenites quickly left their homes and then the Israelites fought against the Amalekites and the Lord gave them a great victory.

But instead of destroying all their property, as the Lord had commanded, Saul and his soldiers kept the best sheep and the best oxen and took all these with them when they marched home.

Then God spoke to Samuel and told him that because Saul had not done as He commanded, another man should be chosen to be king in his place. Samuel was much grieved when he heard this and he prayed all night, asking God to forgive Saul. But the next morning the Lord sent him to Saul to reprove him for his sin.

As Saul came from the land of the Amalekites, he set up a pillar, or monument, so every one might know that he had had a great victory.



SAUL REJECTED AS KING

It was God who had let him win this battle, so I think he ought not to have put up this monument as if he alone had overcome these people.

When Samuel came to find Saul, he was told that he had gone to Gilgal, so the old prophet went on there. It was at Gilgal that Saul had been made king by all the people after his victory over the Ammonites, and at that time you remember Samuel had said that both Saul and the people must always obey God.

When Saul saw Samuel, he came towards him and said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord," which was the beautiful greeting used in those days instead of "Good-morning." Then he added, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (that means "I have done just what God wished me to do").

Saul knew that this was not true, for God had told him to bring nothing back with him. Samuel answered: "If you have done just as God commanded, what is this bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen that I hear?"

Saul answered: "Oh, the people brought the best sheep and oxen to give to God but we destroyed all the others."

It was cowardly of Saul to try to put the blame upon the people because they would not have taken the animals if he had not allowed them to do so. Then it was not true that they had brought them to give to God, for they ex-

pected to keep them for themselves. Samuel said: "Stop! Make no more such excuses but listen to God's message. When you were living on your father's farm, God called you to be king over His people. Then He sent you to the Amalekites to destroy all that they had and why did you not obey Him?"

Again Saul said: "But I did obey God and went as He sent me to the Amalekites and destroyed them. But the people brought some of the sheep and oxen to give them to God here."

Then Samuel replied: "Do you not think that God would rather you should obey Him than make Him a gift? Because you did not obey God, He will choose another man to be king."

So Samuel left Saul and never came to see him again.

XI

THE SHEPHERD BOY

1 Samuel xvi : 11, 12 ; xvii : 34, 35 ; Psalm viii ; xxiii

Picture—YOUNG DAVID RESCUING THE LAMB.—
Elizabeth Gardner

STORY

NOW I want to tell you of a little boy of whom children always love to hear. His name was David and he was born in Bethlehem. Do you remember why this little town is so dear to us? Because the Christ Child was born there, many, many years after David lived.

Seth was David's father and the grandmother of Seth was Ruth. Do you remember the story of this sweet woman, who was such a dear daughter and who left her own home to come with her husband's mother to this same town of Bethlehem? Here she met Boaz who was very kind to her and whom she afterwards married. Their little boy was Obed and when he grew up, he had a son whom he called Seth, and this Seth, as I have said, was David's father.

David had seven brothers and two sisters but, as he was the youngest child, he was especially dear to his father and mother, as his name, which means "the beloved," or "the darling of the house," shows. In that country most of the little chil-

dren had dark eyes and hair but this little fellow was different, for he had auburn, or reddish hair, beautiful blue eyes and fair skin. His sisters were already grown and married when he was born and it was with their little boys that David used to play. The names of these boys were Abishai, Joab, Asahel and Amasa, which are too hard for you to remember, I am afraid. These five little boys used to run races up and down the steep hills, swim in the river and have merry times together, just as boys do now.

When David was older, he helped his father and what do you think his work was? He took care of his father's sheep. Bethlehem stood high on a hill and from it one had beautiful views in all directions. As David led his sheep out to the pastures or rested near them while they fed, he saw many trees, the gray-green olives, the fine oaks and the palms with their feathery branches. Vineyards were there, too, with their purple grapes, and quince, apple, peach and other fruit trees. Then there were lovely flowers—white daisies, yellow tulips, scarlet poppies, roses and many oleander trees. I am sure David loved to watch the flowers as they bloomed from early spring until late in the fall. And he listened with delight to the birds, as they sang in the branches of the trees or flew high over his head.

He had a harp on which he used to play. It



A DRUSE SHEPHERD WITH A LAMB

was not large, like the ones you see now, but was a little one which he could easily carry. Perhaps he tried to imitate the music of the birds' songs or the sound the wind made as it whistled through the trees, or he played the songs and hymns which he had heard sung, and the sheep and lambs liked his music.

But David could not spend all of his time playing on his harp, as he had hard work to do in caring for his sheep. Sometimes wild animals crept near the flocks and David had to drive them away. Would you not be greatly frightened to see a lion or a bear coming towards you? Once a lion came to the sheep which David was watching and seized one of the little lambs. But instead of running away in terror, David caught and killed the lion and saved the little creature from death. Another time he killed a bear, and in that country bears were even fiercer than lions.

Often he stayed out on the hills all night, caring for the sheep, and then he used to look up at the stars and remember the loving heavenly Father who made them. Sometimes great storms came up and then David led his flocks into a cave in the rocks. There he watched how the branches of the trees were tossed about by the wind and how sometimes they were broken off and fell to the ground with a crash. He saw the lightning flash and heard the thunder roll, but he and the sheep were safe in the shelter of the rock.

When David was a man, he wrote some beautiful songs, called Psalms, which we now love to read. In them he tells us of his thoughts when he was a shepherd boy. In one he says: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" (that is, when he looked up at the sky and saw the moon and the stars, which God had made, they appeared so large and so wonderful that it seemed strange to him that the heavenly Father should think also of men). But God made men, he says, almost like angels, and gave them this beautiful world in which to live. And as he thought of these things, he thanked the dear Father for all His goodness.

Another time, as he remembered his life among the sheep, he thought, "Just as I took care of the sheep and the dear little lambs, so God takes care of me." And then he wrote a beautiful song which perhaps some of you know, and which I hope you all will learn some day. It begins, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters." Just as David had led the sheep where they could find food and drink, and pleasant places in which to rest, so the Lord, his Shepherd, had cared for him, giving him food, rest, and beautiful things to enjoy.

He also tells in this song how God had led him in safe paths, just as he had led the sheep in places where they would be safe from danger. And he says that God had comforted him just as he did the sheep and little lambs, for when he called, "Ta-a-a-a, ho-o-o," the sheep ran quickly and cuddled close to him. And just as, at night, he bathed the head of a tired sheep with oil, or bound up a bruised knee and gave the thirsty creature a refreshing drink, so the loving heavenly Father had cared tenderly for him. Then he closes the song by saying that he is sure God will care for him all his life.

In keeping danger from the sheep, David grew strong and brave, so later on he did great deeds. When a boy, he had a sling with which he learned to shoot well. A friend brought me from the country where David lived just such a sling as he used. It is a double rope with a thong of plaited string, which is broad at the middle. I should like to have seen David swing this about his head and then let the stone fly straight at whatever he wished to hit.

David was dear and good and helpful as a boy, so the Bible says of him, as it did of Samuel when he was a child, that the Lord was with him.¹

¹ For a part of the description of shepherd life which I have used I am indebted to "The Song of Our Syrian Guest," by William Allen Knight.

XII

THE ANOINTING OF DAVID

1 Samuel xvi : 1-13

Picture—FIRST ANOINTING OF DAVID.—*Julius von Schnorr*

STORY

AFTER leaving Saul, Samuel went back to his home at Ramah. He was very sad, for he loved Saul and he was grieved that, on account of his great sin, he could not be the king of God's people. As he was sorrowing over this, the Lord spoke to the old prophet and said: "Do not grieve any more for Saul but arise, and go to Jesse who lives in Bethlehem. Take a horn of oil with you, for I wish you to anoint one of his sons to be king."

You know that Samuel usually did just what God wished him to do but now he was afraid and did not trust God. He said: "How can I do this? If Saul should learn that I had anointed another man to take his place, he would kill me."

The Lord answered: "You need not fear. I do not wish any one to know at this time that I have chosen another king. Go to Bethlehem and call the people together to worship Me there.

Call Jesse among the others and I will then show you what to do."

Then Samuel did just as the Lord commanded and when he reached Bethlehem, he called all the people together to worship God. After they had worshipped, the different families had a feast, or big dinner, and Samuel went home with Jesse to enjoy this feast with him.

Before eating, Samuel told Jesse that he wished to see all his sons and they came in to speak to the old prophet, whom every one loved and honoured. As Eliab, the oldest son, came towards him, Samuel thought, "Surely this is the one whom God wishes to be king," for he was tall and fine looking like Saul.

But the Lord said: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature" (that is, "Do not look only to see if he is handsome and tall"); "because I have refused him" (that is, "I know that he is not the right one"): "for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (that is, people often like a man because he is tall and handsome, but God sees his heart and is pleased only when he is kind and good).

Then came the next son, but God did not choose him and then the third, but he, also, was not chosen; the fourth came, but still God said: "This is not the one." Then came the fifth and

the sixth and the seventh, but none of them were chosen. When the seventh had left him, Samuel turned to Jesse and asked, "Are these all your sons?"

And he replied, "No, I have one more, the youngest, and he is caring for the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send for him, for I wish to see all your sons, and we will not eat our dinner until he comes."

A messenger was sent, therefore, quickly for David and he came in haste. He was now a young boy of about fifteen and, as I have told you, he had auburn hair and beautiful eyes. His cheeks were rosy from being out-of-doors so much and he looked well and strong. He had such an attractive face that every one loved to look at him. As soon as he came towards Samuel, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and poured it on David's head. He did not tell either the boy or his father what this meant and they must have been greatly surprised. Perhaps they thought that David was to join the young prophets, or assist Samuel in some way. I am sure they never dreamed that he was to be king, but they knew that God had some work for him to do.

After the dinner, the old prophet returned to his home in Ramah and David went back to his

sheep. The Bible tells us that the Spirit of the Lord came upon David and I know how many thoughts must have filled his mind. When he looked at the glorious sun, as it rose, filling the world with light and beauty, he thought, "The sun is like a strong man who is about to run a race. I wonder if I, too, will have great work to do. Some time I may leave my sheep and these quiet fields and go among the people. Perhaps I shall be a soldier and fight the Lord's battles or perhaps I shall be a prophet and tell others of the dear heavenly Father's love and goodness."

I think he used sometimes to visit Samuel, and then the old prophet would tell him how wonderfully God had led His chosen people. I am sure Samuel took great comfort in this brave, noble boy and he felt sure he would make a better king than Saul.

XIII

DAVID, THE HARPIST

1 Samuel xvi : 14-23 ; xvii : 15

Picture—DAVID PLAYING BEFORE SAUL.—*H. F. Schopin*

STORY

WHILE David was out in the fields, watching his sheep and wondering what work God had for him to do, Saul, in the palace, was very sad and unhappy. He knew that he had done wrong and he felt that God was no longer near to help him. He was angry because Samuel had told him that another man was to be king and at times he even wanted to kill this one who was to take his place.

When he was in these terrible moods, his courtiers (the men who stayed near him) felt greatly troubled and they longed to help him. One day they said to him : " Perhaps if you listened to sweet music, you would not be so troubled. May we not find you a man who plays well on the harp and see if his music would not help you ? "

This suggestion pleased Saul and he told them to bring an harpist to him. Then one of the servants said : " Jesse, who lives in Bethlehem, has a son, David, who cares for his sheep and

who plays beautifully. He is handsome and brave and the Lord is with him."

Saul, therefore, sent messengers to David with the command, "Send me David, thy son, who is with the sheep."

How surprised Jesse must have been at this message! What could the great king want of his son, who was only a shepherd boy! But when the king gave a command, every one had to obey it, so Jesse sent at once to the fields to tell David to come home. David came quickly and he, too, was greatly surprised to find Saul's messengers there. His father made ready a present, for every one who went to a king always carried a gift with him. On an ass (or mule) Jesse put a basket of bread which had just been baked, a skin (or bottle) of wine, and a kid from the flocks, and told David to take them to Saul.

It was about ten miles from Bethlehem to the place where the king had his court but David took long walks every day, so this did not seem far to him. He had in his hand his staff, the stout stick with which he kept danger from the sheep, and on his back was hung his little harp. Around the strings he had woven blue lilies, so that the hot sun should not get them out of tune. As he walked on, he must have wondered why Saul had sent for him and I think that he was glad that he was now to see the king and all the court.

When Saul saw the bright face of the young man, he loved him, as every one else did, and was glad to have him with him. And when one of his dreadful moods came upon the king, David took his harp and played for him. First he played the tunes which the sheep loved and which made them follow him quietly back to the sheepfold at night; then those which the reapers liked, when they came home from their work in the fields; and then the song that was sung for the bride and her maidens at a wedding. As Saul listened to this music, he grew less troubled. Then David sang of this beautiful world and of how good it is for a man to be alive, so he can enjoy climbing over the rocks and hills, a bath in the cool water of the river and a sleep under the trees. And then he sang of the honour that had come to Saul in his being made king, and of God's love for him, until all the evil thoughts left Saul and he became happy and peaceful again.

After some time, when the king was again well, David went back to his sheep, very glad that he had been able to serve the king. And now, as he watched his flocks or lay out under the stars at night, he thought of the king and of all that happened at the court and he wondered if he would ever again have work to do there.¹

¹ Some of the suggestions used in this story are taken from Browning's beautiful poem, "Saul."

XIV

DAVID AND GOLIATH

1 Samuel xvii: 1-53

Picture—DAVID (detail).—*Michelangelo*¹

STORY

YOU remember, children, that when Jonathan was so brave as to go to the camp of the Philistines, with only his armour-bearer to help him fight them, God gave him a great victory and this enemy was defeated and driven far away. Many years had passed since that time and now the Philistines came once more against the Israelites. They pitched their tents on the side of a high hill. Saul gathered his soldiers together and marched against them. He made his camp on another hill, opposite that of the Philistines, while between the two camps was a valley.

The Philistine leaders decided that instead of having all their soldiers engaged in battle, they would send their biggest and strongest man to fight for them. This was a great giant named Goliath. He was much taller than any man you have ever seen. He wore heavier armour than any one else could have carried—a coat of brass, a helmet, or hat, of brass, and coverings of brass

¹ This picture is found in the Perry collection.

for his legs. A great sword hung at his side and he carried a spear which was so heavy that ten men could hardly lift it. A man went in front of him, carrying a shield to protect him.

As Goliath came into the valley, he shouted in a loud voice to the army of Israel: "Send a man to fight with me and if he kills me, all the Philistines will be your servants. But if I kill him, then you must all be our slaves and serve us."

When Saul and his soldiers saw this great giant, they were all afraid. They forgot that God had helped Jonathan win a great victory and that He had enabled them to overcome their enemies many, many times in the past. No one dared to go and fight this terrible giant and all the Israelites stayed in their own camp. Day after day Goliath came down into the valley and boasted of his strength, and made fun of the Israelites because they had no one who was brave enough to fight him.

David had gone back to his sheep, you remember, but his three oldest brothers were in Saul's army. One day Jesse wanted to hear from his sons, so he called David and said: "Take these ten loaves of bread and this roasted wheat to your brothers, and take also these ten cheeses as a present to their captain, and then come back and tell me how your brothers are."

So David arose early the next morning and leaving his sheep in the care of another shepherd,



DAVID

started on his long walk. When he came near the camp, he heard the soldiers shouting, for the two armies, in battle array (that is, having on their armour), were marching to the battle-ground. David left the gifts which he had brought with the man who cared for the baggage and ran quickly to see what was going on. He soon found his brothers and gave them his father's greeting. While he was talking to them, Goliath came into the valley and cried out, as he had done each day, "Why don't you send a man to fight me? What cowards all of you are!"

He came nearer and nearer to the Israelites and as he began to climb the hill towards their camp, the soldiers were greatly frightened and some of them started to run away. No one dared to fight with him, although the king had promised a great deal of money to the man who would do so, and had even said that he would give his own daughter to be the wife of the one who conquered the giant. David heard the boastful words of Goliath and he asked, "Who is this Philistine who dares to defy God's people?" (that is, "to boast that he is stronger and braver than any of the Israelites?")

When Eliab, David's older brother, heard his question, he was angry and said: "Why did you come here, when you should have been taking care of the sheep? You want others to think that you are brave, but I know how bad you are

to leave your work just to see the battle." Eliab knew that this wasn't true, for David had told his brothers that his father had sent him. Instead of answering with cross words, however, David said gently, "What have I done? I only asked a question."

He turned now to another man and asked again why no one went to fight Goliath. At last some one told Saul that there was a young man asking questions about the giant and perhaps he might be willing to fight him, so the king sent for David. When he came before Saul, David said: "Let no man's heart fail because of him" (that is, "let no one be afraid of this giant"); "I will go and fight with this Philistine."

But Saul replied: "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth and he a man of war from his youth" (that is, "he has been a soldier for many years, while you are only a young man").

Then David said: "I kept my father's sheep and when there came a lion or a bear and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him and struck him, and took the lamb out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and killed him. I killed both the lion and the bear, and I will kill this Philistine, also, because he has defied the armies of the living God" (that is, "because he said that he was

stronger and braver than any of God's people, the Israelites"). David said, also, "The Lord who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will save me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul was glad to hear of David's bravery and answered, "Go, and the Lord shall be with you."

He wanted to help David all he could, so he gave him his own armour—a coat of mail and a helmet of brass to protect him. He gave him his sword also, but David did not know how to use this, as he had never had one. Nor could he move quickly in the armour because it was heavy and he was not used to wearing it, so he said, "I cannot wear this, for I am not used to it."

So David took the armour off and, in his simple shepherd's clothes, he went to meet the giant. He took his staff in his hand and as he passed a brook, he picked up five smooth stones which he put in the bag that hung over his shoulder. In his hand was his sling, with which he could shoot so well, you remember.

How anxiously the Israelites watched this young man as he went down to fight their battle! Would he succeed in defeating the terrible giant or would he be killed and they become the slaves of the Philistines?

When Goliath heard that the Israelites had found a champion, or some one to fight for them, he went down into the valley, clad in all his

heavy armour, with the man carrying his shield going before him. He looked about and when he saw David, he could not believe it possible that this young man, with his fair face and in his shepherd's clothes, would dare to fight him. He called out: "Am I a dog that you expect to drive me away with your staff? Come to me and I will soon kill you."

Then David said: "You come to me with a sword and with a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day will the Lord deliver you into my hand and I will kill you, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And that all these people may know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's and He will give the Philistines into our hands."

As Goliath came nearer, David hastened to meet him. And as he ran, he put his hand into his bag, took out a stone and put it in his sling. He then slung the sling around his head and the stone went straight into the forehead of the giant, killing him at once.

Oh, how the Israelites shouted with joy when they saw the great giant fall and knew that God had helped David to kill him! The Philistines were greatly frightened and all ran away. But the Israelites ran after them and gained a great victory over them.

XV

SAUL'S JEALOUSY OF DAVID

1 Samuel xviii; xix: 1-7

STORY

AFTER David had killed Goliath, he was brought to Saul's camp and the king praised him for his great bravery. While they were talking together, Jonathan stood near, and the Bible tells us that "Jonathan loved David as his own soul," that means that he loved him very dearly. The friendship of these two was such a beautiful one that even now, when we wish to say that two men or boys love each other very much, we say they are like David and Jonathan.

These two young men were much alike, for they were strong and brave and they both loved God and tried to obey Him in all things. To show how much he loved David, Jonathan gave him his own cloak, his armour, his sword and bow. (When a king or a king's son gave any of his clothing to a man, it was the greatest honour he could show him.)

Saul had David come to live at the palace because he wanted to keep so brave a young man near him. How little David had thought, when his father asked him to carry the gifts to his

brothers, that he would never go back to his sheep again !

As the soldiers returned from the battle, the women came out to meet them, dancing, singing, and playing on tambourines, triangles and other instruments, to show how happy they were over the great victory. In their songs they told how Saul had been brave but David had been braver. When the king heard these words, he was very angry because they praised David more highly than they did him. From that time he was always jealous of David and tried to harm him. Indeed his angry feelings brought on one of his terrible moods. When David saw that the king was ill, he quickly took his harp and tried to soothe him, as he had done before, not imagining that Saul was angry with him.

Instead of being made calmer by the music, however, the king seized a javelin, or small spear, and threw it at David. But the young man quickly jumped out of the way. Once more he started to play but again he had to stop and jump aside, because Saul tried to kill him. Even then David thought only that the king was so ill that he did not know what he was doing.

When Saul found that he could not kill David, he thought he would send him into battle, hoping that there he would be killed. He therefore made him a captain over a thousand men, and David marched against the Philistines who

were again troubling Israel. David gained many victories, and the Bible tells us that he behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and that the Lord was with him. He went wherever the king sent him, and he was so strong and brave that every one loved him and the soldiers were glad to have him for their captain.

You remember that Saul had promised to give his daughter to the man who should kill Goliath, but when David did this, the king did not keep his promise. Now, however, he said to David, "If you will fight my battles, I will give you my oldest daughter for your wife."

But David answered, "Who am I, or what is my father's family, that I should be son-in-law to the king?"

He was so modest that he did not think he was good enough to marry the king's daughter. Saul still hoped that the Philistines would kill him, but though David fought in many battles, the Lord kept him safe from all danger. But the king did not keep his promise to David, and instead, gave his oldest daughter to another man to be his wife.

Some time after this, Saul, learning that Michal, his youngest daughter, wished to be David's wife, thought of a plan by which he might get David killed. So he ordered his servants to tell David that the king loved him and would give him Michal to be his wife, if he would do

something that was very hard and dangerous. David was never afraid and he quickly did what the king desired and came back in safety to the palace. Michal was then married to David and they were very happy together.

But Saul was more and more troubled because he saw that the Lord was with David and that he could do him no harm. At last he spoke to Jonathan and asked him to kill David. You know how dearly Jonathan loved his friend, so he went quickly to David and said: "My father wishes to kill you. Now stay in some safe place until to-morrow and then hide in a field, so you will not be seen. I will bring my father into that field and will talk to him about you."

The next morning Jonathan went with his father into the field and there said: "Do not think ill of David for he has never tried to harm you. When every one else was afraid, he bravely fought Goliath, thus saving God's people. Since then he has fought many battles for you and has always done just as you wished. Why do you strive to kill this man, who has done so much both for you and for all Israel?"

Then Saul was ashamed of his evil thoughts and he said: "I will no longer seek to harm David."

When his father had left him, Jonathan called David and told him all that had been said. So David went back to the palace with his friend and for a time the king was kind to him.

XVI

A NARROW ESCAPE

1 Samuel xix : 8-24

Picture—DAVID'S ESCAPE FROM SAUL
STORY

SOON after David's return to the palace, the Philistines came again to fight the Israelites. David quickly called his soldiers together and marched against them and soon drove them all away. On his return from this great victory, the women again danced and sang, praising him for his bravery.

When Saul heard these songs, his dreadful jealousy came upon him, and David, thinking that the king was ill, took his harp and began to play, hoping to make him better. But instead of being helped by the music, the sight of David made Saul so angry that he threw his spear at him, hoping to kill him. David jumped aside and the spear went into the wall. Then David hastened to his home, and I know how sad and distressed he must have been to think that the king, whom he had always faithfully served, wanted to take his life.

After this Saul was determined to kill David. He sent messengers that very night to his home,

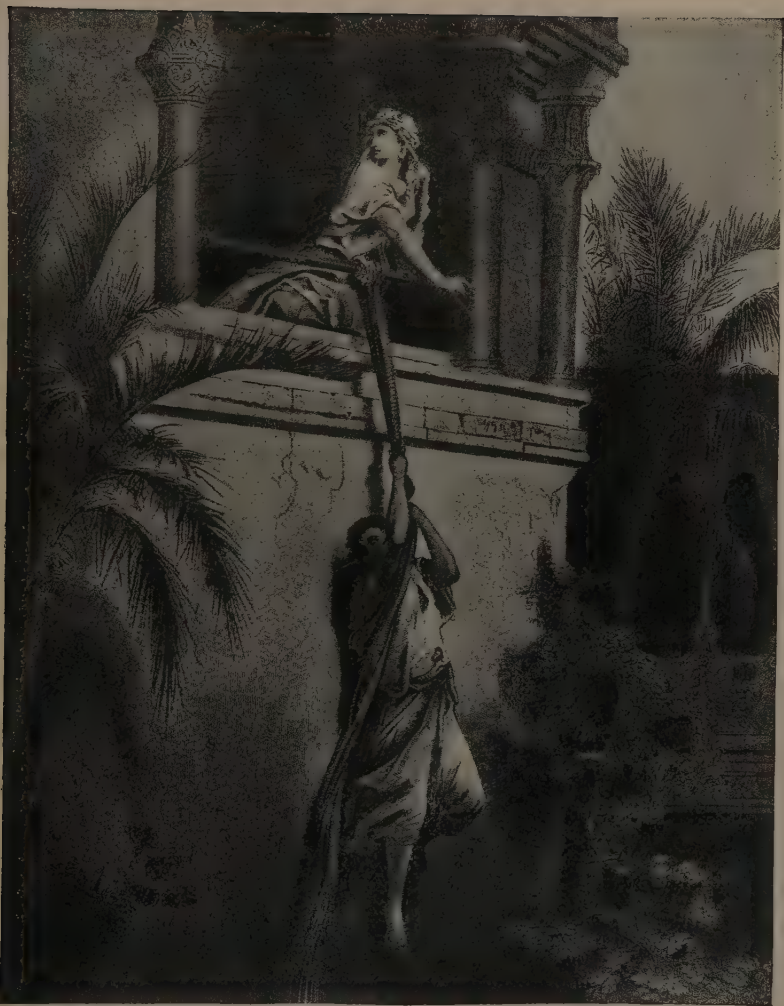
commanding them to watch there until he came out and then to kill him. You remember that Michal, Saul's daughter, was David's wife and she loved him very much. In some way she heard of her father's dreadful plan and she went quickly to David and said: "If you do not escape to-night, my father's soldiers will kill you in the morning."

But how could David escape with these men watching the door? Suddenly Michal thought of a plan. The house was built against the wall which surrounded the town and some of the windows were on that side. Michal let David down by a rope from one of these back windows and he hastened away in the darkness, without being seen by any one.

As he did not come out the next morning, Saul's messengers knocked at the door and asked for him. Michal wanted to give David as much time as possible to escape, so she put a statue in the bed that looked like a man. When the messengers came, she took them where they could see this, and, in the darkened room, they thought it was David. So they went back to Saul and told him that David was ill, but the king commanded, "Bring him to me in the bed."

When the messengers went to do this, they found only the statue.

How hard it must have been for David to have to leave his own home, because it wasn't safe for



DAVID'S ESCAPE FROM SAUL

him to stay there, and to hasten away in the darkness. "Why does Saul hate me so," he thought, "when I have always been faithful to him?"

He wondered who could help him in his trouble. He did not wish to go to his father and mother because he thought this might make the king angry with them and some harm might come to them. But he thought: "I will go to Samuel. It was he who put the oil on my head and surely he can tell me what is best to do."

I am sure that the old prophet gave David a warm welcome and listened to his story of Saul's cruel treatment. The next day Samuel took David to a place at a little distance from his home, where was one of the schools of the prophets which he had started. Perhaps he thought that Saul would not find David there and he knew that it would be a joy for him to be for a time with these young men who were noble, good and true. After his hard life, fighting the king's battles and then trying to escape from Saul, it must indeed have been pleasant for David to rest a while in this quiet place, with all these earnest young men.

But after a time some one told Saul where David was and he at once sent messengers to take him. But when these messengers reached the school and heard the young men singing hymns of praise to God, they forgot the errand

upon which they had been sent and joined in the singing. When the king heard of this, he sent other messengers but they, too, began to sing as soon as they reached the school. Once more Saul sent messengers but these, also, joined in the songs.

Then Saul said, "I will go myself and seize David."

He took some soldiers with him and started. But when he had gone a little way, God made him, also, forget his errand. When he reached the school, he joined the others and spent the day and night singing with them. Every one was surprised to see him there and said, "Is Saul, also, among the prophets?"

While the king was singing, David slipped quietly away, and I know that he thanked God for keeping him safe and not letting Saul harm him.

XVII

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND

1 Samuel xx

Picture—DAVID AND JONATHAN.—*Doré*

STORY

WHEN David escaped from Saul, leaving him singing with the prophets, he quickly returned to his own home. Then he went to Jonathan, for he felt that he must see this dear friend once more. When they met, David asked, "What have I done? Why does your father seek to kill me?"

Jonathan answered: "It cannot be true! You shall not die. My father tells me everything and he would surely have told me, had he meant to kill you. It is not true."

(You remember that after Saul had told his son that he wished to kill David, Jonathan had spoken to his father of his friend's goodness and of his bravery in killing Goliath, and then Saul, feeling sorry for his cruelty, had said that David should not die.)

David answered Jonathan: "Your father knows that you love me and so he has not told you because he does not wish to grieve you, but

it is certainly true that I may be killed at any moment."

He had forgotten that, though Saul was strong, God was stronger and could protect him in all danger. Then Jonathan, who was always such a true, faithful friend to David, said, "I will do whatever you wish."

David replied: "To-morrow there is to be a feast" (or big dinner) "and I should be at the table." (David sat at Saul's table because he was a great captain and had married his daughter.) "If you are willing to excuse me, I shall not go to this dinner and if your father misses me, say that I asked you to let me go to my father's home in Bethlehem to worship there with my family. If your father makes no objection, I will return to the palace, but if he is angry, then we shall know that he means to kill me. If you will do this, it will be a great kindness."

Jonathan promised to do as David wished, and also to tell him if his father meant to harm him. Then David asked, "How shall I know if your father is angry?"

The two friends had been talking where there were other people but now Jonathan said, "Come out into the fields with me, so we may be sure that no one hears us."

When they were alone, Jonathan, who was sure that God would protect David, so his father could not kill him, comforted and helped his

friend. He said: "I know that you will be king in my father's place and when you are great, do not forget to show kindness to me and to my children."

As Saul's son, Jonathan should have been the next king, but instead of being angry with David or jealous of him, because he was to have this honour, Jonathan loved him dearly and was glad to help him. He now said: "In three days come and hide behind that rock. Perhaps I shall be watched, so I cannot speak to you, but I will bring a lad" (or little boy) "with me here and I will shoot three arrows. If I say to the lad, when he runs to pick them up, 'The arrows are on *this* side of you,' then you may safely return to the palace, but if I say, 'The arrows are *beyond* you,' then you must go away."

Then the friends said good-bye and Jonathan returned to the palace. The next day, when Saul sat at dinner, Jonathan was on his right hand and Abner, a great captain, was on his left, but David's seat was empty. The king said nothing, for he thought, "Something very important has kept David away and surely he will be here to-morrow."

There was another feast on the second day and again David was not there. Saul turned to Jonathan and asked, "Why has David not come to dinner either yesterday or to-day?"

His son replied: "David begged me to allow

him to go to his home in Bethlehem where all his family are to worship God."

Saul was very angry when he heard this answer, for he had planned to kill David at this dinner. He turned to his son and said: "Do you not know that if David lives, he will be king instead of you? Send for him, for he shall surely die."

Jonathan replied, "Why will you kill him? What has he done?"

Then Saul was driven to fury because Jonathan took David's part and he raised his spear and was about to strike his own son, but Jonathan rose quickly and left the table. He forgot that his father had tried to strike him, for he was in such deep grief over Saul's wish to kill David, his dear friend. He stayed by himself and was too sad to eat anything all that day.

The next morning he took his bow and arrows and went with a little lad out into the field. He said to the lad, "Run and find the arrows which I shoot."

He shot an arrow and as the lad ran to pick it up, Jonathan called loudly, "Is not the arrow beyond you?"

Twice more he shot an arrow, each time calling out, as the lad ran to find it, that the arrow was beyond him. Poor David, hiding behind the rock, knew from this that he must go away, for Saul really meant to kill him. When the lad

had found the arrows, Jonathan called, "Hurry, and come back quickly with them."

The lad picked up the arrows and brought them to the king's son and he did not know that Jonathan's words were meant for David as well as for himself. Jonathan gave him his bow and arrows and told him to carry them back to the city.

When he was out of sight, Jonathan called to David to come to him. David bowed low three times, because thus every one greeted the king or the king's son. But Jonathan raised him and took him in his arms and they kissed each other and wept bitterly, for they did not know when they should see each other again. They stayed together but a few moments because it was dangerous for David to linger. Then Jonathan said, "Go in peace and the Lord be between me and thee" (that is, "God will take care of us both").

So David left his dear friend and went away alone to hide from Saul, while Jonathan went slowly and sadly back to his home.

Once more only did the two friends meet. Some time after this David was in a wilderness, where were hills, great rocks, and caves in which wild animals had their dens. Many men had joined him; some of these were his friends and others were poor or in trouble and had come to him because they thought he would help

them. They had all been hiding in the caves, so that Saul and his army should not find them.

One day, when David was weary and discouraged, he looked up and there stood Jonathan! Oh, how glad he was to see this dear, faithful friend! The Bible tells us that Jonathan strengthened his hand in God (that is, he told him not to be discouraged, for God would help him and keep him safe from all danger). He said, "Fear not; for Saul my father shall not find thee and thou shalt be king over Israel and I shall be next unto thee."

He would rather his dear friend should be king than to rule himself. They could talk together only a few moments but Jonathan's loving words made David strong and brave again. They kissed each other good-bye and Jonathan went back to his father's camp, while David stayed in the cave.

XVIII

GOOD FOR EVIL

1 *Samuel xxiii : 29 ; xxiv ; Psalm lvii : 1*

Picture—DAVID SHOWING SAUL THAT HE HAD
SPARED HIS LIFE.—*Doré*

STORY

FROM the wilderness, where Jonathan came to him, David and his men went to Engedi, which means "the Fountain of the Kid"—a place where many wild goats and little kids lived among the rocks. A beautiful stream of water tumbled out of these rocks and rushed down to the plain below. Palm trees and shrubs grew near the stream and lovely gardens and vineyards were also found there, while in the plain there were fruit trees and vegetable gardens. David and his men went up above this beautiful place and lived in the caves which were in the rocks.

While there he wrote a song in which he said that just as a little bird felt safe under the wings of its mother, so he felt safe in God's care, even though the king were hunting him.

After a time some one told Saul that David was hiding near Engedi. So he took three thousand men and went to seek David and his

men among the rocks of the wild goats. He sent his soldiers out in all directions: some climbed the rocks, others looked into the caves; every spot was searched.

In front of a few of these caves the shepherds had piled up stones, so the sheep could be kept in them during a storm. At noon one day the king came to one of these caves. The sun was hot and as he had been hunting for David all the morning, he was very tired, so he went in to rest. But it happened that David and his men were in that very cave! It was large and so dark that, as Saul entered, he could see nothing. David was far back in the cave and he and his followers could see Saul plainly as he came in from the light. The king lay down and went to sleep and then David's men said to him, "Here is Saul, your enemy. God has delivered him into your hand that you may kill him."

Do you think David did kill Saul? No, although he knew that, had the king found him, he would have put him to death at once. David was very brave when he killed the giant Goliath, but I think that he was even more of a hero when he did Saul no harm. He wanted the king to know that they had been in the same cave, so he went softly to him and cut off a piece of his robe. His men were much disappointed because he would not kill Saul and they begged that they might do this. But David

would not allow them to harm the king. He said, "God hath chosen Saul to be king and I will never kill one who has been thus anointed."

After his rest, Saul arose and he and his men marched away. When they had gone a short distance, David came from the cave and called out, "My lord the king."

Saul looked back and David bowed down very low, as every one did to the king. How astonished Saul must have been to see the man whom he had been hunting so long come out of the same cave in which he had been sleeping! And David said: "Why do you believe those who tell you that I wish to harm you? To-day I could easily have killed you when you were asleep and some of my friends urged me to do this, but I said, 'No, I will never harm the Lord's anointed.' And, my father" (how lovingly David speaks), "see this piece of your robe in my hand and believe that as I cut it off and did not kill you, so I would never harm you. And yet you hunt me and seek to kill me. The Lord knows that I am innocent and He will save me from you."

When Saul heard these words of David, he said, "Is this your voice, my son David?"

And Saul burst into tears, for he was so ashamed of the way he had treated poor David. And he said to David: "You are better than I, for you have done good to me after I have

treated you badly. And to-day, when I was in your power, you did not kill me. May the Lord bless you for the kindness which you have shown me to-day. And I know that you will be the king of Israel, therefore promise me that when you become king, you will be kind to all my family."

David gladly promised this. Then Saul and all his soldiers marched back to their homes but David and his men still stayed at Engedi.

XIX

THE LAST MEETING OF DAVID AND SAUL

1 Samuel xxvi

Picture—DAVID IN THE CAMP OF SAUL.—*H. F. Schopin*

STORY

WHILE in Engedi, David heard of the death of Samuel. All the Israelites mourned for this good man who had always helped them to love and serve God. And no one grieved more than David. To him Samuel had been like a father, and he must have felt sad and lonely to know that he could no longer go to the prophet for help and advice.

He took his men and went to the wilderness of Ziph. It was there, you remember, that Jonathan had come to him and perhaps he hoped to meet this dear friend again. But as soon as they learned that he had come into their country, the people of Ziph went to Saul and told him that David was hiding there. Though David had saved the king's life when he might have killed him, Saul forgot this kindness and went with three thousand of his soldiers to the wilderness to try to find him.

David sent some of his men to find out whether the king had really come against him once more and learned that he had indeed pitched his camp by a hill near him. One night David went to the top of this hill where he could look down upon Saul and his army. Then he turned to the two men who were with him and asked, "Who will go with me to Saul's camp?"

Quickly Abishai replied, "I will go down with you."

This Abishai was David's nephew and a man of about his own age. He and David crept quietly through the trees and bushes which grew on the hillside, the light of the moon showing them the way.

When they reached the camp, they passed quickly by the sleeping soldiers until they came to Saul's tent, where the king lay asleep, his great spear stuck in the ground by his head. Abner, the captain of the army, lay near Saul and he, too, was asleep. Abishai whispered: "God hath delivered up thine enemy into thy hand this day: now therefore let me smite" (or strike) "him, I pray thee, with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not smite him a second time."

And David answered: "No, thou shalt not smite him, for it would be a sin to kill God's anointed. Either he will have a sudden illness, or his time will come to die, or he will be killed

Last Meeting of David and Saul 99

in battle. I will not harm him but we will take his spear and the cruse" (or bottle) "of water that is at his head and then let us go."

So David took the spear and the cruse of water and they hastened away and no one out of all that great army awakened. Then David went quite a long distance to the top of another hill from which Saul's camp could be seen in the moonlight. Here he called loudly, "Abner! O Abner!"

And Abner answered, "Who art thou, that disturbest the king?"

Then David said mockingly, "Art thou not a brave man, Abner? It was thy place to guard the king but thou didst sleep so soundly that thou didst not hear the men who came to his tent. And now see where the king's spear is and the cruse of water that was at his head."

This calling awakened the king and he was astonished to hear David speaking. He called out, "Is this thy voice, my son David?"

And David replied: "It is my voice, my lord, O king. Why dost thou seek me, for what evil have I done thee? If men have told thee that I desire to harm thee, do not believe them, for see, a second time I could have killed thee and I have not done so."

Saul answered, "I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because thou hast saved my life this day. I have

acted like a fool and have done thee great wrong."

Then David said: "Behold the king's spear! Let one of thy men come over and get it. As thy life was saved by me this day, so may the Lord save my life and bring me safely out of all my troubles."

Saul answered him, "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt do great things."

Then the king and his soldiers went back to his palace and never again did he and David meet.

XX

THE DEATH OF SAUL

*1 Chronicles xii : 1, 2, 8, 17, 18 ; 1 Samuel xxviii : 4-6 ; xxxi ;
2 Samuel i*

STORY

AS the time passed, Saul had more and more trouble. Many of his strongest and best soldiers had left him to join David. The Bible tells us that some of these men could shoot arrows and hurl stones as straight and true with their left hand as with their right, and of others it says that they were as strong as lions and could run as swiftly as deer upon the mountains. Some of these men came from near Saul's home and others from near where David had lived.

When he heard that they were coming, David went to meet them and said : " If you come to help me, I shall be grateful to you, but if you come to take me to Saul, may God punish you because I have done no wrong."

Amasai, David's nephew, was with these men and he answered :

" Thine are we, David,
And on thy side, thou son of Jesse ;
Peace, peace be unto thee,
And peace be to thine helpers ;
For thy God helpeth thee."

How glad David must have been to hear these words and to have these strong men join him.

When these men went to David, Saul was left with only a small army, and now his old enemies, the Philistines, marched against him. When he saw their great hosts, he was very much afraid. He asked God what he should do, but he had not tried to please the heavenly Father, so God did not answer him.

He went into battle with a heavy heart and though he fought bravely, the Philistines gained a great victory. The Israelites fled before their enemies and not only was Saul killed but also Jonathan and two of his brothers. The Israelites, who were in the cities near where the battle was fought, fled in terror from their homes and the Philistines came and lived in their houses.

A messenger hastened to David and told him that Saul and Jonathan and many others were killed, and that all the Israelites had fled from the Philistines. David was greatly shocked and he asked, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?"

The man answered, "See, I have brought the king's crown and the bracelet which he wore."

He thought that David would be glad to know that Saul, his enemy, was dead, but instead David rent, or tore, his clothes, which, you remember, was the way that people showed great grief in those days. His men did the same, and

they ate no food all that day because they saw that David was so sad over the death of Saul and Jonathan and over the defeat of the Israelites. David, forgetting all Saul's unkindness, mourned for him, but most of all he grieved for Jonathan who had been such a true, faithful friend to him.

He wrote a beautiful song which you will like to read when you are older. In it he sang :

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places !"

(That is, all Israel had met with a great loss because Saul and Jonathan had been killed.)

"How are the mighty fallen !

* * * * *

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided."

(That is, they had died together.)

* * * * *

"Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul :

* * * * *

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle !

* * * * *

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan :

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me :

Thy love to me was wonderful,

Passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen !"

XXI

DAVID MADE KING

2 Samuel ii : 1-4, 8-11 ; iii : 1, 36 ; v ; Psalms cxliv : xxix

Picture—KING DAVID.—*Domenichino*

STORY

AFTER David had mourned for Saul and for his dear friend Jonathan, he wished to know what was the best for him to do. So he asked God where he should go.

“Unto Hebron,” came the answer.

This was a large city in Judah where David’s own people lived. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph had dwelt there in early days, so David must have been glad that God sent him to this place. It was in a valley with high mountains all about it. As soon as he received God’s commands, David ordered his men to pack all that they had on camels and asses and make ready for their journey.

David rode at the head of his men and I wish that you might have seen him. He was not tall but he was strong and handsome. He had a full beard and his face was brown from the sun. He wore loose robes of bright colours and on his head was a gay coloured turban. Near him rode



KING DAVID

his captains and soldiers, in different costumes, mounted on camels or asses. Their wives and children were also with them and all were glad to return to the land of Israel.

As they neared the city, the people of Hebron came out to welcome them with shouts of joy. How pleasant this place, with its beautiful oaks and olive trees, its vineyards and gardens, must have looked to David after his long days spent in crossing the desert. The people were glad to have him come among them and they at once gathered together and made him king over all Judah. David was dressed in robes of bright colours, beautifully embroidered, and the priest poured oil upon his head, as Samuel had done when he was a boy. Then the people shouted, "God save the king! God save the king!"

But in another part of Israel, Abner, Saul's captain, made a son of Saul king. For seven years and a half David ruled over the people of Judah only, but as the time passed many other people from different parts of Israel came to Judah, wishing to have him for their king. So his kingdom grew larger and stronger, while that of Saul's son became smaller and weaker. The Bible tells us that whatever David did pleased all the people.

At last Saul's son was killed and then the Israelites—a vast multitude from all parts of the country—came to Hebron. They said to David:

"When Saul was our king, you were his captain and you helped us to win great victories. Now we want you to be our king, for we know it is God's will and we are sure that you will care for us as a shepherd cares for his sheep."

David replied that he would try to rule them justly and that he would care for them as tenderly as he had cared for his father's sheep when he was a boy. He also promised to try to obey all God's laws.

For three days the people stayed in Hebron and they had a great feast. Those who lived there had provided bread and meat, meal, figs, raisins and many other articles of food, so that there should be enough for all those who came from a distance. All enjoyed the feast and were glad that God had brought them together and that David was now their king.

The city in which David wished to live was Jebus, which was built high upon a hill and was in the centre of the country of the Israelites. But the Jebusites, who were enemies of God's people, now lived there, so David called his soldiers and marched against the city. But the Jebusites were not afraid because they felt sure that no one could capture their fortress which was built on the hill. It had strong walls and deep ravines on three sides, while the high hill protected the fourth side. The Jebusites sent word to David, "You may come whenever you

like but even our blind and lame people can keep you out."

They meant that with such strong walls no one could enter their city, even if all their soldiers were lame, so they could not march, and blind, so they could not see to shoot. Then David said, "Whoever first climbs the steep wall and enters the city, shall be the leader of my soldiers."

Joab, one of David's nephews, a strong, brave man, quickly climbed the difficult and dangerous place; the other soldiers followed and soon Jebus was in the hands of the Israelites. When David had taken the city, he wrote a song about it, and taking his harp, he sang :

"Blessed be the Lord, my rock,
Who teacheth my hands to war,
And my fingers to fight :

* * * * *

My high tower, and my deliverer ;
My shield, and He in whom I trust ;
Who subdueth the people under me.

* * * * *

I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God ;
Upon my harp will I sing praises unto Thee ;
Who gives victory to kings ;
Who delivereth David, Thy servant, from the hurtful
sword.

* * * * *

Happy is that people that is in such care ;
Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

David changed the name of the city which he had taken to Jerusalem, which means "the dwelling-place (or home) of peace." He made it larger and much more beautiful than it had been before and built a strong wall about it and it was often called "The city of David." The king of Tyre, one of David's neighbours, sent him gifts of cedar and other woods. He sent carpenters and masons, also, who built a beautiful palace of stone and cedar for David. The Bible tells us that David grew greater and greater, for the Lord was with him. I think that he talked often to the dear heavenly Father and tried to obey Him in all that he did.

But when the Philistines heard that David was king over all Israel and that he had taken Jerusalem, they marched against him. David went down to meet them and found that the great army of the enemy was spread all over the valley, the same army that had killed Saul and his sons, and had won such a great victory over the Israelites. But David was not afraid of them any more than he had been afraid of Goliath, when he was a boy. He prayed to God, saying, "Shall I fight the Philistines and wilt Thou give me a victory?"

And the Lord answered, "Go, for I will deliver the Philistines into thy hands."

So David fought them and gained a great victory. He said that God had overcome his

enemies, for he felt sure that he had won the battle only because the Lord had helped him.

After a time the Philistines came once more against the Israelites and again David asked the Lord what he should do. God answered that he should not go out to meet them as he did before, but that he should go around behind them until he came to a grove of trees. When he heard a loud rustling in these trees, then he should attack the Philistines.

David did just as the Lord commanded him and went with his soldiers around behind the enemy to the grove, where he waited. Soon the wind began to blow and when the Philistines heard the loud rustling of the branches, they thought that a large army was coming upon them. David cried to his soldiers, "Forward!" for he knew that God was near to help him. The Israelites shouted and rushed upon their enemies and the Philistines were terrified and fled away. So again the Lord saved His people from them. David wrote another beautiful song in which he told how God had shaken the trees and thus terrified the Philistines.

XXII

THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM

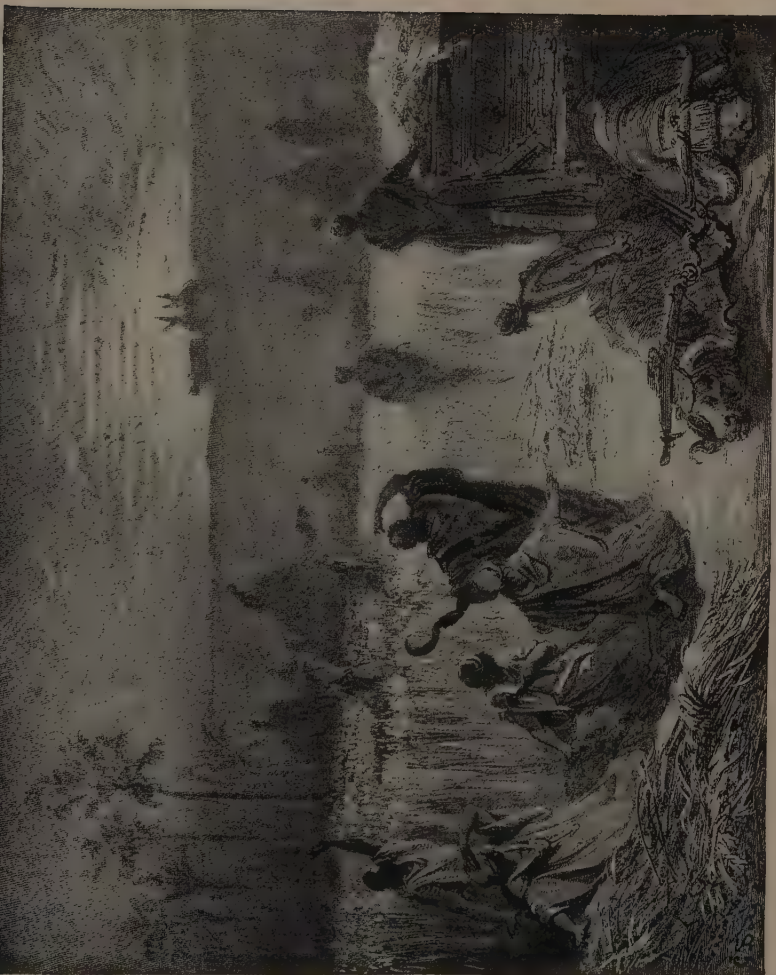
*2 Samuel vi ; vii ; viii ; 1 Chronicles xiii-xviii ;
Psalm cxxxvi*

Picture—KING DAVID AND THE ARK OF THE
COVENANT

STORY

AFTER these victories, King David wished to bring the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. You remember that the ark had been taken by the Philistines, when Samuel was a little boy, and then brought back by them to the Israelites. It had been for many years in the house of one of the priests but now David wanted to have it in the city where he lived. He called the people together and told them what he wished to do and they said that they would gladly help him.

You know that the ark was covered with gold and that two golden angels, with outspread wings, bent over it, while inside were kept the ten commandments. A great multitude of people went with King David to bring up the ark and they all sang for joy. Many played on harps, tambourines, cymbals and other instruments, while a number of the priests blew silver trumpets.



THE RETURN OF THE ARK

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When they entered Jerusalem, the ark was carried to a tabernacle, or tent, that David had prepared for it and then again the people sang one of David's beautiful songs, which I know that you will like to read when you are older. In it they thanked God for all His goodness to them. Then David blessed the people and gave them each a loaf of bread and some meat, so they would not be hungry as they journeyed back to their homes.

David arranged that priests and Levites should be at the tabernacle to help the people in the worship of God, just as our ministers help them now, and he wrote many beautiful songs and chose men with fine voices to lead the singing. Others played on cymbals, harps and different instruments, so the music must have been very beautiful. In one song some sang,

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,"

and others replied,

"For His mercy endureth forever."

Then the first told of all the wonderful things that God had done for His people and the others kept singing,

"For His mercy endureth forever."

One day, some time after this, when King David was in his house, he spoke to a prophet named Nathan who was with him and said, "See

now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains " (or in a tent).

He had been thinking that it was not right for him to have a beautiful house when there was no house, or church, for God, so he wished to build a house for the Lord which should be even more beautiful than his own palace. Nathan answered, "Do all that you wish to do, for the Lord is with you."

But that night God spoke to Nathan and told him to tell David that he was not to build a house for Him. He had taken him from his sheep, had protected him from Saul and other enemies and had made him king of His people. But because he had had many battles to fight, he could not build this house, or temple. His son, however, who would be the next king and who would rule Israel in peace, should build it. Then God promised that He would be a loving Father to David's sons, as He had been to him, and that one of them should always rule over Israel.

When David heard from Nathan what God had said, the Bible tells us that he went in and sat before the Lord, that means that he entered the tabernacle, and there he talked to the dear heavenly Father just as one friend would talk to another. He said: "Who am I, O Lord God, that Thou shouldst do so much for me? Thou hast cared for me all my life and now Thou dost

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promise to do even more for me. Not only hast Thou made me king over Thy people but Thou dost say that my sons shall always rule over them.

“What can David, Thy servant, say to thank Thee? Thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee. And what nation is like Thy people, whom Thou hast brought up from Egypt and made a great people? Thou hast promised this goodness unto Thy servant and therefore let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue forever before Thee.”

When he had finished his prayer, David returned to his palace and I know that he was very glad and thankful because God had promised him all these blessings. The Lord had said that his son should rule in peace, so David wished to overcome all the enemies of Israel. He marched, therefore, against the Philistines and won such a great victory that they did not again trouble Israel. He defeated many other nations, also even those a long way from Jerusalem, so all Israel was at peace. The Bible tells us that the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went, that means that God took care of him and kept him safe in all dangers.

In these wars the king took shields of gold and a great deal of silver, brass and other

precious materials from his enemies. The nations sent rich presents, also, to David and all these treasures he put away carefully, so his son might use them when he built the house for God. Though the Lord did not wish David to build this house, or temple, for Him David wanted to help all he could by getting precious material together with which his son might build it.

All the nations now knew that the Lord was with His people Israel and had helped them to defeat their enemies. David's soldiers loved and honoured him and used to talk often of his brave deeds, from the time that he killed the giant Goliath until he won victories over all the nations. He was very handsome and all the Israelites were proud of their king and loved him because of his goodness to them. When the army returned to Jerusalem, after conquering the nations, David and all the soldiers went to the tabernacle and praised God.

Then the king put soldiers in all parts of Israel who should protect the people, and the Bible tells us that he executed judgment and justice unto all his people, that means that he was always fair and just to every one. You remember how loving and tender he had been to his sheep and lambs, when he was a boy, and I know he felt that now he was the shepherd of his people and he wished to care for them in the same loving way.

XXIII

DAVID AND THE SON OF JONATHAN

2 Samuel iv : 4 ; ix ; Psalms civ ; xlvii

Picture—DAVID IN THE TEMPLE.—*Pieter Lastman*

STORY

EVERYTHING was now at peace in Israel. The people were free to plow their fields, sow their seed and reap their harvests, with no fear of enemies coming upon them. The blacksmiths, whom the Philistines once prevented from doing their work, could now make and sharpen the tools which the farmers used. The women were busy with the spindle and distaff, making wool and flax into garments, which they then covered with beautiful embroidery. The walls around the cities were rebuilt. Wells were dug and vineyards planted. In the lovely valleys were many fruit trees—orange, lemon, plum, apricot, quince and banana. The sheep were pastured in safety on many hill-sides.

David went out at times to see his kingdom and, as he beheld the grand mountains and the great sea, the beauty of the grass and flowers, and the singing birds, he sang in praise to God :

" Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord, my God, Thou art very great.

* * * *

The trees of the Lord are full of sap,
The cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted;
Where the birds make their nests;
As for the stork, the fir-trees are her house.
The high mountains are for the wild goats.

* * * *

O Lord, how manifold " (or many) " are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

* * * *

I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live:
I will sing praises to my God."

When the Sabbath came, the king and the people worshipped God in the Tabernacle. On cymbals and trumpets and other instruments the people played. David, too, played on a harp and all sang praises to God. One of David's songs which they sang began:

" Oh, clap your hands, all ye people;
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

* * * *

Sing praises to God, sing praises:
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
For God is the King of all the earth."

But though now a great king, David did not forget his early days. He thought of the time when he cared for his father's sheep and then of how God had helped him kill the giant Goliath

David and the Son of Jonathan 117

and save Israel. Then he remembered how he had gone to Saul's palace and how good Jonathan had been to him. As he thought of this dear friend, he wished that he might do something to show his love for him, and so he asked his attendants, "Is there any one still living who is related to Saul, to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

They knew of no one but they answered, "There is a servant of Saul's, named Ziba, who may perhaps know of some one."

David sent for this man and asked him, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him?"

And Ziba said unto the king, "Jonathan hath yet a son who is lame on his feet."

Think how surprised the king was! He exclaimed, "A son of Jonathan! Where is he?"

Then Ziba told him where he could be found. I wish now to tell you about this young man. In the last battle which the Philistines fought against Saul, you remember that not only was the king killed but also Jonathan and two of his brothers. Jonathan's little boy was five years old at that time and when his nurse heard the dreadful news that his father and the king, his grandfather, were killed and that the Israelites were defeated, she took the little boy and started to run away from the palace to a safe place. The little boy's name was Mephibosheth ('tis a

hard one to remember, is it not?) and he could not run as fast as his nurse, so she picked him up in her arms. But as she ran, she stumbled and dropped the little fellow. The fall hurt him so badly that he was always lame after that.

A kind man, named Machir, had taken him and brought him up in his own home. Machir lived in a place surrounded by the desert which was therefore called Lo-debar, meaning without pasture. Here, far away from Jerusalem, Mephibosheth had grown to be a man and now he had a little boy of his own.

One day a messenger came, saying that the king wished Mephibosheth to come to him. I think that he was frightened and thought, "Does King David wish to kill me because my grandfather Saul was so unkind to him?"

But he dared not refuse to go, so he took the long journey with the king's messenger. When he reached Jerusalem, he was brought before David and there he bowed very low to show honour to the king. But listen! He heard the king's kind voice saying, "Mephibosheth."

And he answered, "Behold thy servant."

Then David said unto him: "Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for the sake of Jonathan, thy father, and will restore thee all the land that belonged to King Saul, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."

I am sure that Mephibosheth thought he must

be dreaming ! Was he really to leave that dreary place in the midst of the desert and come to Jerusalem to live and was he also to have all the land which King Saul had owned ? Then, better than all else, was he to sit at the king's own table ? He could not speak for a moment and then he said, " What is thy servant that thou shouldst do so much for him ? "

David called Ziba and told him that he had given all Saul's land to Mephibosheth and he wished him to take care of it. He was to plow, sow and reap it, and bring half the grain and fruit to Mephibosheth, while the other half he might keep for taking care of it. Ziba bowed low and said that he would do all that the king commanded.

Some kings might not have liked to have a lame man come to their table, but David was more tender and loving to Jonathan's son because he had this great trouble. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and ate with David and his sons and was always grateful and loving to the king.

XXIV

THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM

2 Samuel xiii : 37-39 ; xiv : 1, 21, 25, 33 ; xv : 1-15 ; xvi : 15 ; xviii ; xix : 1-8

Picture—DAVID MOURNING FOR ABSALOM.—*Doré*

STORY

KING DAVID had many children and I want now to tell you of one of them who was named Absalom. He was a very handsome young man with a full soft beard and thick heavy hair. He was very proud of his hair, which he wore long on his shoulders. The Bible tells us that no one in all Israel was praised so much for his beauty as Absalom, because he was perfect in appearance, from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head. He was graceful and attractive, brave and clever, and every one liked him.

David loved his children dearly and always visited and cared for them when they were ill. Once in a song he wrote,

“ Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.”

That is, he could understand better what the heavenly Father's love was because he knew

how tenderly he, himself, loved his children. But David had made the same mistake that Eli made so long ago and had let his sons do just as they pleased, so they had grown up to be selfish and willful. Absalom at length did a very terrible thing—so terrible that he was afraid his father would punish him severely. He, therefore, fled from his home and went to the home of his grandfather, which was quite a distance away, and stayed there three years.

David loved Absalom dearly and missed him very much. When Joab, the captain of the king's army, saw how David grieved for his son, he persuaded him to send for Absalom. When Absalom came to the palace, he bowed low before his father but David raised and kissed him to show that he was forgiven.

David was growing old and Absalom, instead of helping him, began to plot, or plan, to be made king in his father's place. Was not this a very wicked thing to do? Absalom had fine chariots and many horses, and men to run before him, so the people would turn and look at him, as he drove past, and then exclaim, "How handsome Absalom is, and see his splendid horses and chariot! He looks like a king!"

Then, when those in trouble came to Jerusalem to see David, Absalom would meet them and say: "My father is too busy to attend to you but if only *I* were king, I would be glad

to help you. You have the right in this matter and I would do you justice."

And when a man bowed low to him because he was the king's son, Absalom would put out his hand and raise him up and kiss him. In this way, the Bible tells us, Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel, that means he made them like him by pretending that he was better and more kind than his father.

At last he went to David and said: "May I go to Hebron to worship God? I wish to go there because, when I was at my grandfather's home, I promised God that if He would bring me back to Jerusalem, I would worship Him in Hebron where I was born."

And the king said unto him, "Go in peace."

So he went to Hebron. But he had told his father a wicked lie, for as soon as he reached this city, instead of worshipping God, he sent messengers all over Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, shout, 'Absalom is made king in Hebron!'"

Then, dressed in his rich robes, he had the oil poured upon his head, and all the people shouted, "Long live King Absalom!"

Soon the news was brought to David that Absalom had been made king. Think how dreadfully David must have felt to learn that his own son, whom he dearly loved, had behaved so wickedly! He at once decided to leave Jeru-

saalem, so that Absalom should not march against it and kill the people. Many of David's soldiers, courtiers and servants went with him and it must have comforted him to see how much they loved him. But all were sad because the old king had to leave the city, which he loved and which he had made so beautiful, and flee away from his son.

Absalom went to Jerusalem and took his father's palace for his own home. After a few days he called together those who had followed him, and marched against his father. His army was a large one and he was very sure that he would win a victory.

David wanted to go with his soldiers against his son but the people begged him to stay in the town to which he had fled, so he should not be hurt, for he was now an old man. He stood at the gate, therefore, as his army marched out, and told the captains to be kind to Absalom, for even though his son had treated him so wickedly, David still loved him.

David's soldiers were so brave that they soon defeated the army of Absalom and this young man was killed. When David learned that his son was dead, he grieved bitterly for him. "Oh, my son Absalom," he cried, "my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died for thee, oh, Absalom, my son, my son!"

He forgot how cruel and wicked Absalom had

been and he remembered only how much he loved him—so much indeed that he wished he might have died for him. When the soldiers saw how terribly the king grieved for his son, they went to their tents as sad as if they had been defeated, instead of having won a great victory. Then Joab came to the king and said: "Your soldiers have fought bravely for you and now you are making them all feel sad. Will you not go and speak to them?"

So David went out and all the soldiers came to him and he thanked them for fighting so bravely for him. Soon after that David returned to Jerusalem and I know that he thanked God for bringing him safely back to his home again.

XXV

THE LAST DAYS OF DAVID

*1 Kings i : 32-40, 46-48 ; ii : 1-4 ; 1 Chronicles xxviii :
xxix ; Psalms lxxii ; xxxvii : 23*

STORY

AFTER David's return to his palace, he tried to please the heavenly Father in all that he did and the Bible tells us that he kept God's commandments and followed Him with all his heart, that he might do only that which was right in God's eyes.

You remember that God had said that He did not wish David to build a temple, or church, for Him but that his son Solomon might build it, and as David wished to do all that he could in this beautiful work, he collected, or brought together, the material with which to build it. Now that he had peace once more, he could give his time to this work. He had stone taken from the quarries, beautiful cedar trees cut down, and iron, copper, silver, gold and precious stones collected. The king of Tyre, who had helped David build his own house, now sent his men to work for David and they cut the stone into blocks, sawed the trees into boards and helped to get everything ready.

David was now old and feeble and before he

went to be with the dear heavenly Father, he wanted to make his son king. He sent, therefore, for two of his ministers and for the captain of his soldiers and told them to take his son Solomon and put him on the king's own mule and then to go with him to Gihon, a place near Jerusalem, and there make him king. These men bowed low before David and answered, "We will do as you wish and may the Lord be with Solomon as He has been with you."

Soon the king's soldiers were drawn up in front of the palace and a great many of the people of Jerusalem were gathered together there. The king's mule, with handsome harness, was led up and Solomon mounted it. He was a fine looking boy of about twenty and he was beautifully dressed in the bright coloured and richly embroidered robes that kings wore in those days. The party slowly marched to the place of which David had spoken and there the priest poured oil on Solomon's head. Then a trumpet was sounded and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!"

As they returned, the people played on pipes, or flutes, and shouted and sang for joy. When they reached the palace, Solomon took his seat on his father's throne and the people came and bowed before him. Then David thanked God for giving him a son to be the king of His people as he, himself, had been.

There were many people living outside of Jerusalem who had not been present when Solomon had been made king and David wished that they, too, might see the oil poured on his son's head, so messengers were sent all over the country, north and south, east and west, to invite the people to this great occasion. Thousands and thousands of them came and as they travelled to Jerusalem, they talked of all that David had done for them, of his wealth and power, of the material he had collected for the Temple, and of their joy that his son was now to be their king. When they reached Jerusalem, every room in every house in the city was soon full; beds were made on the roofs of the houses and even on the mountains near by tents were put up.

When all the people had arrived, the great meeting took place. David told the Israelites that as he had been chosen king by God, so now the Lord had chosen Solomon to be their king. He urged them to keep God's commandments at all times, that means to do always just what God told them to do. If they did this, they and their children would always live in the beautiful country which God had given them.

Then David told them how he had wanted to build a temple for God, in which the ark should be placed, but the Lord wished Solomon, his son, to build it. Then turning to Solomon, David said: "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou

the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind ; for God sees all hearts and He knows even our thoughts. The Lord hath chosen thee to build Him a house : be strong and of good courage, and do it : fear not, nor be dismayed ; for the Lord God, even my God, is with thee ; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord be finished."

David gave Solomon the plans for the Temple (or the picture which would show how it was to be built). Then he told the people that, wishing to help all he could, he had prepared material, wood and stone, iron and brass, gold, silver and precious stones for the Temple. "Now," he asked, "who of you will help in this work?"

First the chief men of the people, next the captains, and then all the others brought gold, silver, precious stones and other gifts and gladly gave them to be used in building the Temple. David rejoiced with great joy, the Bible tells us, when he saw how willingly the people gave all these beautiful gifts.

Then David thanked God for all that He had done for His people and asked Him to bless Solomon and to give him a perfect heart, so he might keep His commandments and build the Temple for Him. All the people, also, prayed and blessed the dear heavenly Father. The priest then poured the oil on Solomon's head a second

time, so that all the Israelites might see that he was made king. After this the people sang a song that David had written, in which they asked God to help Solomon rule wisely, and then they all had a great feast.

When David knew that he must soon die, he called Solomon to him and said: "Now that I am to leave thee, be strong and show thyself a man. And keep God's commandments and walk in all His ways, so thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest."

Soon after this David went to be with the dear heavenly Father but the Israelites never forgot him. They often used to talk of all that he had done and sing the songs which he had written, and even to-day we read and sing these beautiful songs and they help us to keep close to God. In one of them, which David wrote when he was an old man, he said that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delighteth in his way, that is, God is pleased when people try to do what is right and He will show them every step that they should take. When you are older, I think that you will like to learn some of these beautiful songs of David.

XXVI

KING SOLOMON'S CHOICE

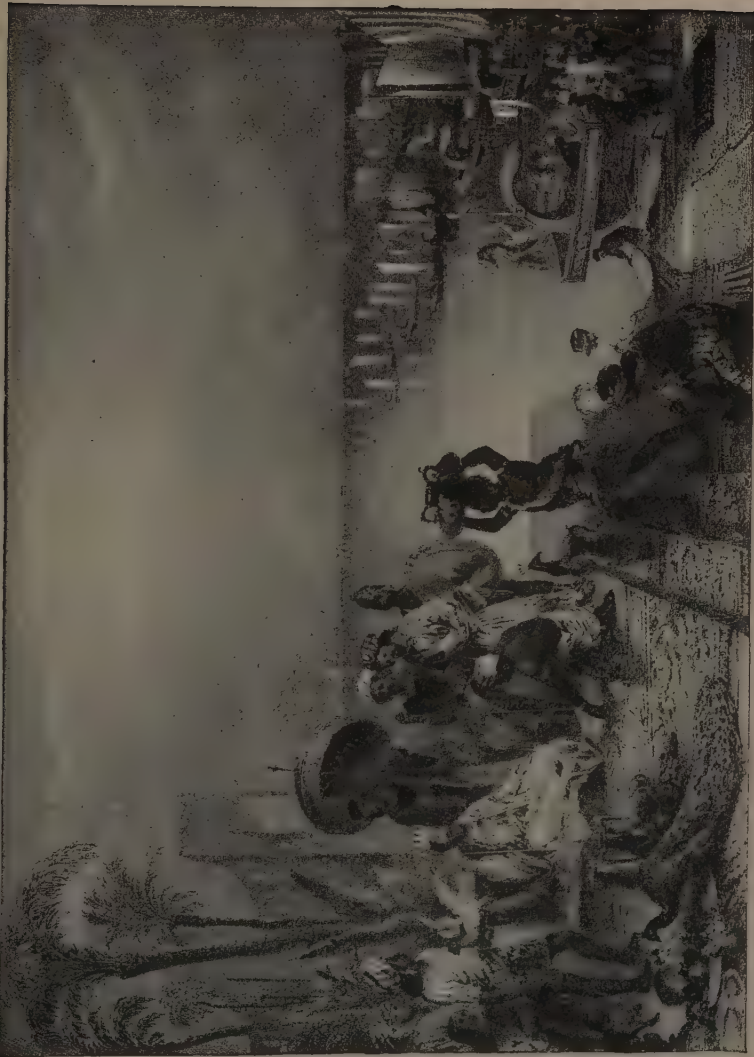
1 Kings iii: 1-15; iv; 2 Chronicles i; Proverbs xx: 11; xv: 1; xxv: 21; xvi: 32; xviii: 24a; xiv: 21b; vi: 6-8

Picture—PRESENTS GIVEN TO KING SOLOMON.—
H. Melville

STORY

AFTER David's death, Solomon reigned over the Israelites. He often spoke of his dear father David and he tried always to do what he would have wished him to do. We know that he was a loving son to his mother, also, and the Bible tells us that once, when she went to ask him something, he rose to meet her and bowed low before her, and had a seat placed for her at his right hand. But, best of all, he loved the Lord and tried to obey and honour Him, as his father had done, so God was with him as He had been with David.

Soon after he began to reign, Solomon called the Israelites together—the captains and judges, the governors and chief men, and all the people—and went with them to Gibeon and there they all worshipped God. The night after he had done this, Solomon had a dream. In his dream God came to him and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."



PRESENTS GIVEN TO KING SOLOMON

What do you think he chose, children? Do you think that he asked God to make him rich, or to give him a long life or many friends? No, listen to what he did ask. He said to God: "Thou hast showed unto Thy servant David my father great lovingkindness, both while he lived and now also in giving him a son to sit upon his throne. And now, O Lord my God, Thou hast made me king instead of David my father, but I am as a little child; I know not what to do. Thou hast placed me over Thy people—a people too great to be numbered. Give me, Thy servant, wisdom to rule Thy people, so that I may know what is right and what is wrong, for who could judge this great people without Thy help?"

The Lord was pleased with these words of Solomon and He said unto him: "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, but hast asked wisdom to rule My people, over whom I have made thee king; behold, I have done according to thy word" (that is, "I have done as thou hast asked"): "lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there hath been none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee" (that is, "I will make thee the wisest man that ever lived").

"And I have also given thee that which thou

hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days. And if thou wilt obey Me, and walk in My ways, as David thy father did walk, then I will give thee a long life."

And Solomon awoke; and behold, it was a dream, but yet he was very sure that God had spoken to him. He returned to Jerusalem and there again he worshipped and praised God.

After this his people came to him with hard questions and he always answered them wisely, so the Bible tells us that all Israel saw that he had the wisdom of God. Other nations also heard of him and by all he was considered the wisest man that ever lived.

Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so the Egyptians were the friends of the Israelites, and all the other nations were at peace with them and brought beautiful presents to King Solomon. As God had promised to do, He gave him great wealth, so silver and gold were like stones throughout the country. The king had a great many chariots and horses and a multitude of officers, attendants and servants. Throughout Israel the people dwelt safely and had plenty to eat and drink, so they were all happy.

Solomon wrote songs as his father had done and he made many proverbs, or wise sayings, also. These you will like to read when you are

older, but some of them I think you can understand even now, so I will give them to you. "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right," that is, when one sees what a little child does, one may know whether he is a good child or not.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." If some one speaks crossly to you and you answer gently and lovingly, then the one who spoke will not be angry any longer; but if you, too, use cross words, then there will be more trouble.

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink," that is, be kind even to those who have been unkind to you, for that is the best way to make them sorry for what they have done.

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city," that is, if one keeps from being cross and angry, it shows that he is very strong, and to rule one's spirit, or to keep from saying unkind words or doing unkind, cruel things, is braver than to be a great soldier and to conquer a whole city.

"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly," that is, if you want others to love you and to be your friends, you must always be kind and friendly to them.

"He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is

he." If we are kind to those who are poor and in trouble, we shall be happy.

And then to lazy people, Solomon said: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard" (or lazy one); "consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest;" that is, he tells lazy people to watch a little ant, which has no one to tell it what to do and yet carefully collects its food during the summer, so that it has plenty to eat when winter comes.

Solomon knew a great deal about trees, and about beasts, birds and fishes, so many people came to him to hear all the wise things he had to tell them.

XXVII

THE TEMPLE

1 Kings v-viii; ix : 1-9; 2 Chronicles ii-vii

Picture—SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.—*Photographed
from Schick's model*

STORY

DO you not like to build houses and forts, gates and walls, children? I am sure that every child enjoys building with blocks or stones, and likes also to watch carpenters and masons at work. Would you like now to hear of a wonderful house that King Solomon built?

You remember that when David built a palace for himself, he wanted also to build a beautiful temple for God. But the Lord said that, though it was right for David to have this wish, He could not permit him to build the Temple because he had had to fight and carry on wars. God promised, however, that Solomon, David's son, should have peace from his enemies and that he should build this house for God. But David did a great deal, you remember, in collecting gold, silver and brass, wood, iron and stone to be used for the Temple, and these he had given to his son.

Soon after Solomon began to reign, Hiram, king of Tyre, sent greetings to him, for he had

always been David's friend and he wished to be a friend of his son, also. When Solomon replied to this greeting, he told King Hiram that his father David had wished to build a house for God but he had not been able to do so. Now, however, he, himself, wished to begin this Temple at once and he asked King Hiram to help him. Some of Hiram's people, the Sidonians, were very skillful in preparing wood for building and Solomon asked that these men might cut and prepare the cedar trees for him.

King Hiram was very glad to help Solomon and he wrote that his people would cut down the beautiful cedar and cypress trees, slide them down the sides of the mountains, and then make them into rafts and float them on the sea to Joppa, from which place Solomon's men could drag them up to Jerusalem. In return for this labour, Solomon promised to give wheat and barley, oil and wine, which Hiram was very glad to have.

For several years thousands of men were busily working to prepare the materials with which to build the Temple. Some hewed out great stones from the mountains, others cut them into perfect shape, while still others made ready the wood. Then the top of the mountain, or highest hill, in Jerusalem, where the Temple was to be built, was too small, so it had to be made larger, and great walls built about it to hold it up. These walls were made so wonderfully

strong that some of them are standing even now, almost three thousand years after they were built.

At last in the spring, four years after Solomon had been made king, he began to build the Temple. This was done in a different way from any you have ever seen, for so carefully had the material been prepared, that no ax nor hammer nor other iron instrument was used in building. The great stones, which made the foundations and the walls, fitted perfectly one upon another, and so the building rose silently like a fairy palace.

The Temple was built of stone and, inside, it was made of the beautiful cedar wood, which was later all covered with gold. Before the entrance was a porch and on this porch stood two beautifully carved pillars of brass. In this porch were hung the gilded shields which David had taken from some of his enemies in war and perhaps the sword of Goliath was also there.

And inside the Temple, farthest from the entrance, was a small room made of cedar all covered with gold. In this room were placed two beautiful cherubim, or angels, made of olive wood covered with gold. Their wings were outspread and two touched each other in the centre of the room, while the other wing of each cherubim touched the wall. A curtain embroidered in blue, purple and crimson, looped with chains of gold, hung at the entrance of this room.

On the walls of the Temple were carved beautiful designs of palm trees and flowers, while on the doors there were carved palm branches and festoons of lilies and pomegranates. Then the walls and doors and even the floors of the Temple were covered with gold. Must it not have been wonderfully beautiful?

For seven years the workmen laboured, building this marvellous Temple. Several courts, or inclosed yards, were in front of it and in one of them was a grove of olive, palm, cedar and other trees, where birds used to make their nests and sing their sweet songs.

In the Temple were placed tables of gold to hold the bread which the priests ate, an altar of gold and ten large golden candlesticks. There was also a great basin of bright brass which rested on twelve brass oxen.

When everything was finished, Solomon called together all the princes and leaders of the people to march in a great procession. Then the priests carried the ark, which contained the ten commandments, from the tent where David had placed it and set it down in the small room at the end of the Temple, under the outstretched wings of the cherubim. And when the ark was in its place, a cloud filled the room. Solomon and all the people knelt down and covered their faces, for they knew that God had come to dwell in His House.

The priests and musicians, robed all in white, sang, and played on golden harps or blew on silver trumpets. One of their songs was a beautiful one written by David, which begins :

“Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good ;
For His mercy endureth forever.”

Then the king, in beautiful embroidered robes, blessed the people, after which he turned towards the altar and, kneeling, he prayed to God. He thanked the dear heavenly Father for all His goodness to His people and for letting them build this Temple for Him, and he asked Him to be with them always, to forgive them if they did wrong and to keep them near Him.

Then all the people had a great feast, lasting seven days, during which they rejoiced that the Temple was finished. This was followed by the Feast of Tabernacles, which was something like our Thanksgiving Day, only it, also, lasted seven days. During this feast the people lived in booths made of boughs of trees, and they waved willow and palm branches and thanked God for giving them the abundant harvests. After these feasts the people returned to their homes, and the Bible tells us that they were joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had showed unto David His servant and to Israel His people.

When the people had returned to their homes, the Lord again came to Solomon and told him that He had heard his prayer and that He would be in the Temple which he had built and would hear and answer the prayers which the people offered there. And if Solomon obeyed Him, as David had done, then he would be blessed and God would be with him. If, however, he did not do this, but, instead, worshipped the idols of the heathen, then God would leave him and would no more stay in the Temple.

XXVIII

THE VISIT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

1 Kings vii : 1-12 ; ix : 15-28 ; x ; 2 Chronicles viii ; ix

Picture—QUEEN OF SHEBA AT THE COURT OF SOLOMON.—*H. F. Schopin*¹

STORY

AFTER Solomon had finished the Temple, he built a beautiful house for himself. In front of it was a building where he kept his armour and this had so many pillars, made of the beautiful cedar trees, that it looked like a forest and so was called the house of the forest of Lebanon. Solomon had two hundred targets and three hundred shields made of gold, and these hung on the pillars in the armoury.

Back of this building was the throne room where the king heard the petitions of the people (that is, they went there to ask him to help them, if they were in trouble). This room was made of cedar wood. The throne, made of ivory and gold, was wonderfully beautiful. It had six steps and on each step was carved a lion, one on each side, while two lions stood below. Still farther back was Solomon's own house and a house for

¹ Solomon in his Glory, by Thomas Nast, is also a good illustration for this story.

his wife, Pharaoh's daughter. All these buildings were made of costly stones very carefully cut, while cedar wood was used on the inside.

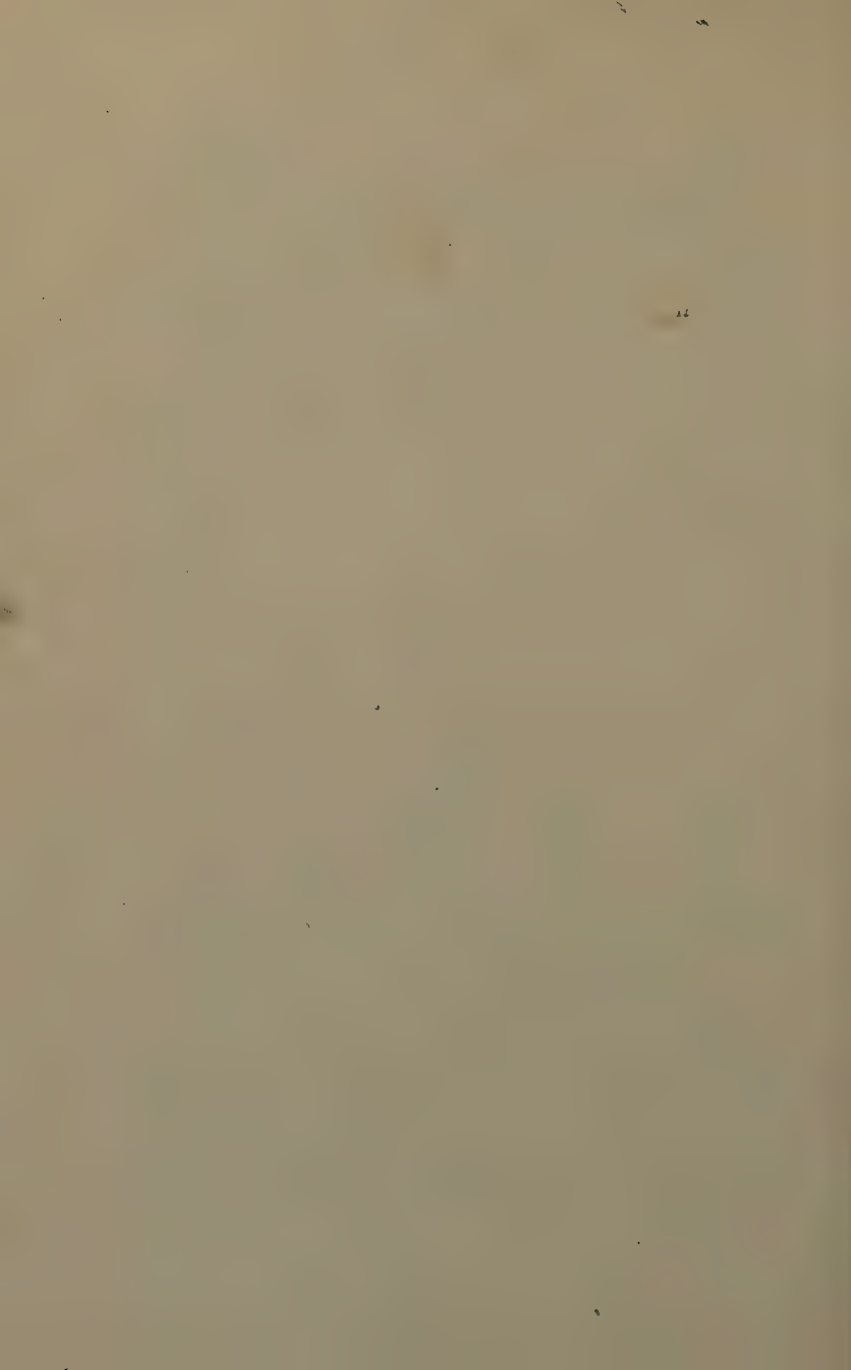
Solomon laid out lovely gardens with fountains, trees and flowers where he might go when the weather grew warm. He repaired the walls of Jerusalem and built forts and many cities. In some of these cities he kept his chariots, of which he had many hundreds, and his horsemen, of whom there were twelve thousand.

He then built a fleet of ships and King Hiram sent men who knew the sea to sail with the Israelitish sailors. These ships went to far countries and brought back to Solomon a great deal of gold and silver, beautiful woods, ivory and precious stones. They brought gorgeous peacocks, also, and chattering apes, or monkeys, which the Israelites had never before seen. The merchants of other countries came to Jerusalem and they brought horses and spices and gold.

And the fame of Solomon spread to all countries, because he was greater and richer and wiser than any other king. Merchants, when they went to their homes, would talk of his greatness, of his wisdom and of his wealth, and the sailors on his ships would boast of their wonderful king. Many visitors came, therefore, to his court to hear his wise sayings and to see all these wonders. Other kings sent ambassadors or even came themselves to see him. They brought him many gifts



QUEEN OF SHEBA AT THE COURT OF SOLOMON



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—vessels of gold and silver, richly embroidered garments of crimson, purple and gold, armour, horses and mules—so, year by year, he grew richer and had more costly and beautiful things.

Among his visitors came the Queen of Sheba. She lived in a southern country, far away from the land of Israel. She had heard of Solomon's glory and wished to see for herself if he were really as great as people said. How do you think she travelled? On the back of a camel, and with her came many attendants and servants. She, also, brought rich gifts for King Solomon—camels, loaded with spices, gold and precious stones.

When she reached Jerusalem, she came to the palace and Solomon met her and answered all the questions with which she tried to puzzle him. There is a story told that she had two wreaths made, one of real flowers and the other of artificial ones, but so perfectly was the second one made that the wreaths could not be told apart. "Which are the real flowers?" the Queen of Sheba asked Solomon.

He looked at them a moment and then glancing at the window, he saw some bees buzzing about it. "Open the window," he ordered his servants, "and let the bees come in."

The bees came buzzing in and flew quickly to the real flowers, thus answering the question. Everything that the Queen of Sheba wished to

know, Solomon told her and then he showed her about his palace and city. When she saw the Temple all lined with gold, the house of the forest of Lebanon with its many pillars, where the golden shields and targets were hung, the wonderful throne of ivory and gold, the parks and gardens, the walls and forts, and the horses and chariots, she was greatly astonished.

Then she heard the men and women singers, with their harps of red sandalwood and gold, and she was shown, in the palace, the golden tables with their rich food and golden dishes, and the many courtiers, attendants and servants, in their beautiful costumes, until at last she exclaimed: "All that I heard in my own country of what thou hadst done and of thy wisdom and great wealth was indeed true. I did not believe it until I came to see for myself, and now I find that the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard.

"Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, that stand continually" (or always) "before thee, and that hear thy wisdom! Blessed be the Lord thy God, who delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made He thee king to do justice and righteousness" (or to do what is just and right).

And she gave Solomon the gifts she had brought him—an immense amount of gold, and a

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great many spices and precious stones. Solomon gave her all that she desired—everything for which she asked and much besides. Then she returned to her own country, and I am sure that she often talked of the wise king and his wonderful court.

XXIX

ELIJAH'S MESSAGE

1 Kings xvi : 23-33; xvii : 1

Picture—ELIJAH.—*John Sargent*¹

STORY

WHEN King Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam, did not try to please God. He treated his people so cruelly that many of them left him and chose another man, Jeroboam, for their king. These people were now called Israelites, while the people who stayed with Rehoboam were called the people of Judah.

Jeroboam was afraid that the Israelites would again join the people of Judah, if they went to Jerusalem to worship in the beautiful Temple, so he put up altars in other places where they might worship. This he knew was wrong and God punished him, so that both he and his son had much trouble. Indeed each king of Israel did wickedly before God and led the people into sin.

¹ Photographs of details of Sargent's great painting in the Boston Public Library are found in all the collections. The picture of Elijah might be shown to the children, as an illustration for this story.

Omri was one of these kings, and the Bible tells us that he did worse than all who went before him, for under him the people forgot God and worshipped the idols, or gods, of the heathen.

Omri built a beautiful city, called Samaria, choosing for it a hill which rose in the midst of a wide valley encircled by other hills. From this height a magnificent view could be obtained of the plain and valleys and of the sea. Strong walls were built about the city, so that each king who lived there might feel safe from his enemies. Here Omri built his palace and here he lived, surrounded by nobles and attendants. But he had many wars and some of his cities were taken from him by the Syrians.

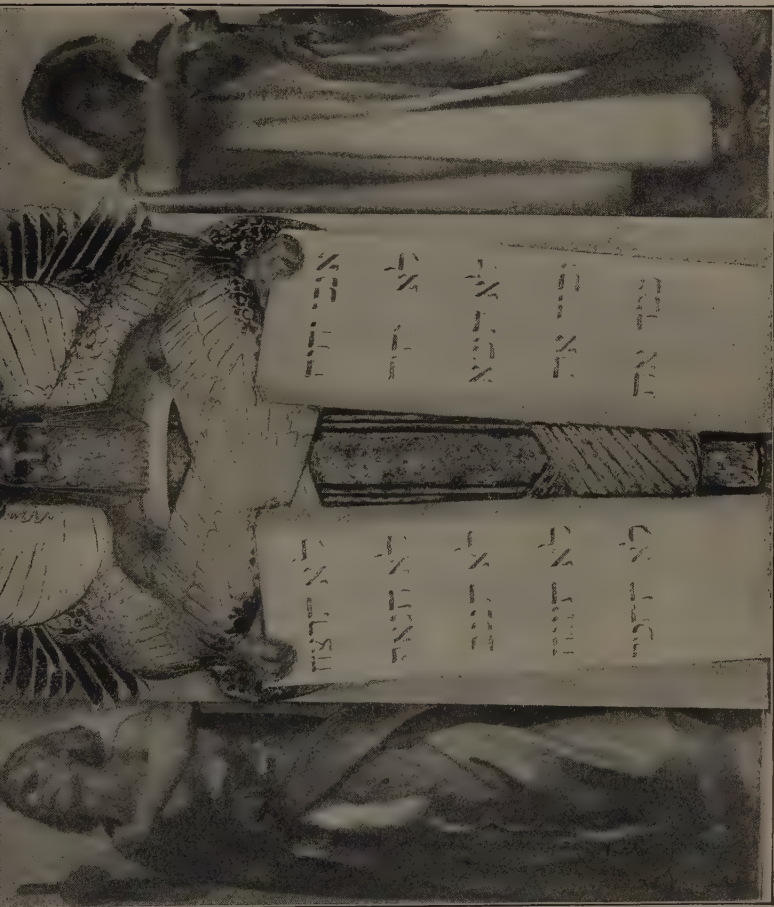
When he died, his son Ahab became king and we read in the Bible that he, also, did evil and led the people into sin. He married a wicked woman, named Jezebel, who came from a heathen nation. She wished not only to worship her heathen gods herself, but she tried to make the Israelites, also, worship them. She had temples and altars built on all the high places, and thousands of false prophets led the people in the worship of these heathen gods. Then this wicked Jezebel had many of God's prophets put into prison or killed.

Ahab lived during the winter in the palace at Samaria which his father had built but, for a summer home, he chose a place called Jezreel,

where he built a beautiful palace of ivory and gold, with lovely gardens about it. His nobles had great wealth and many of them, also, built ivory palaces. Ahab allowed his wicked wife to have her way in everything and he built in Samaria a great temple to Baal, one of her heathen gods, and there he worshipped with her.

More and more, therefore, the Israelites forgot God and worshipped heathen gods as their king did. To make them remember Him, God sent a prophet to King Ahab. This prophet, whose name was Elijah, was one of the greatest men who ever lived. We do not know anything about him as a boy or young man but the Bible tells us that he came from Gilead, which was a hilly, rocky country near the desert. In it were great forests, rushing mountain streams and fierce wild beasts. Its people were rough and wild and they lived out-of-doors, caring for their sheep. Probably, when a boy, Elijah took care of his father's sheep on those wild hills, and the rough life in the open air made him so strong that, when he was grown, he could run faster than a horse.

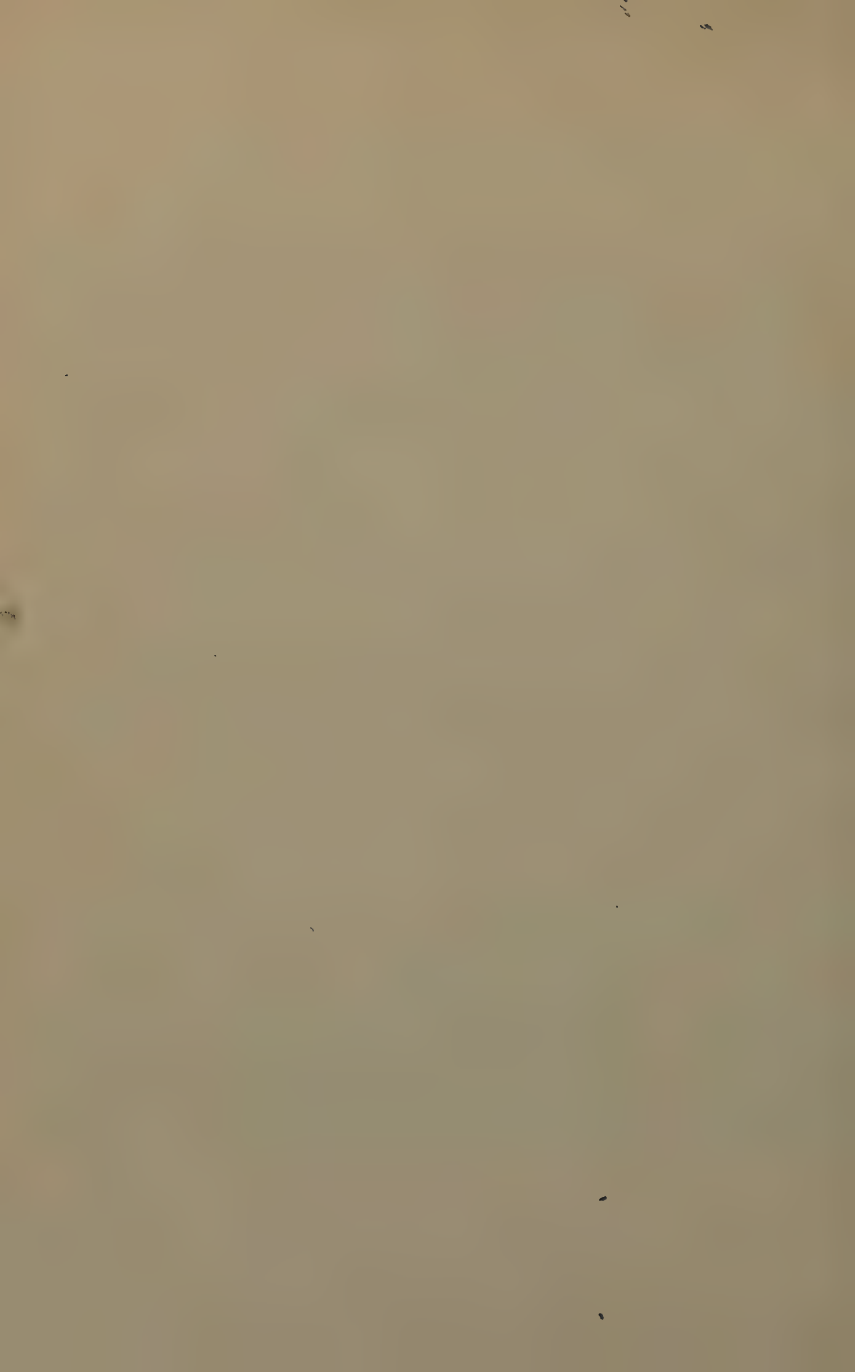
We know that his parents believed in the heavenly Father, for the name they gave him, Elijah, means "The Lord is my God." As he grew older and saw how wicked the Israelites were in disobeying God and worshipping the gods of the heathen, I am sure that he was



ELIJAH

MOSES

JOSHUA



greatly troubled. He prayed to the heavenly Father, asking Him to lead the people back to Himself, and at last God gave him a message to take to Ahab.

One day as the king, in his gorgeous purple robes and attended by his courtiers and servants, was sitting upon his throne in his beautiful ivory palace at Jezreel, there strode into the room a tall, thin man, with heavy black hair streaming over his shoulders. He wore a heavy mantle of rough, black camel's hair, fastened about the waist with a leathern girdle and he carried a strong staff in his hand. How startled the king and all those with him must have been to see this strange figure!

Without bowing to the king, as all did who approached him, Elijah said: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

What a terrible message! "As the Lord God of Israel liveth." Ahab and the people had forgotten God and had turned to heathen idols, but God still lived, and now here was His prophet who said that he stood before the Lord, just as he stood before the king, and who announced that for a long time there was to be no rain nor dew. Long, long before this God had told Moses that if the Israelites worshipped other gods, He would shut up the heavens so no rain could fall,

and then nothing could grow. When Ahab heard that this terrible punishment had come, I am sure he was at first too surprised to speak, and before he had recovered from his astonishment, Elijah had gone.

XXX

GOD'S CARE OF ELIJAH

1 Kings xvii : 2-16

Picture—ELIJAH FED BY THE RAVENS.—*Washington Allison*

STORY

AS soon as Elijah had left the king, God spoke to him and said: "Go and hide by the brook Cherith. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

There was great need for Elijah to find a safe hiding-place, as both Ahab and the wicked Jezebel would search for him to put him in prison. But God, who had sent him to the king, did not fail to care for him, after he had delivered His message. Elijah was one of God's most faithful followers and just as a soldier obeys promptly the commands of his officer, so Elijah always did exactly as God told him, and now he went at once to the brook Cherith.

This brook was in a wild ravine. On either side rose steep walls of rock, covered with foliage. At the bottom ran a slender thread of water, protected by the leaves of the trees from the hot sun. Should any one come near, Elijah could

hide in some cave in the rocks, just as David used to hide from Saul.

Here the prophet stayed for many months. He was neither afraid nor lonely, for God was with him and I am sure that he talked with the dear heavenly Father as one friend talks with another. And the Bible tells us that every morning and every evening the ravens brought him food. These wild birds had their nests in the rocks near him and I think that when they brought food to their little ones, there was plenty for the prophet also.

But as the days passed and the weather grew warmer and still no welcome rain fell, the water in the brook grew less and less. Do you think that Elijah was troubled and feared he should soon have none to drink? No, I am sure that he trusted God and knew that He would care for him and continue to give him both food and water. At last the brook was quite dry, the bushes growing along its banks were withered and even the birds came no more. Then the word of the Lord came unto Elijah, saying: "Arise, get thee to Zarephath; which belongeth to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee" (or feed thee).

What a strange command this was! Sidon was in Queen Jezebel's own land, and was he to go there among *her* people? But Elijah was

not troubled, and as soon as God's command came, he arose and went to Zarephath. 'Twas a long, hard journey of more than a hundred miles and he had to travel by night, so Ahab's messengers, who had been searching everywhere for him, should not find him. But at last he reached the city, weary and faint from hunger and thirst. As he neared the gate, he saw a woman gathering some sticks. Perhaps this was the very one to whom God had sent him, he thought. He called to her and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."

The woman looked up and saw the tall figure in its strange costume. She knew that he was an Israelite and she knew also, from his heavy mantle and leathern girdle, that he was a prophet. But she was glad to show kindness to a stranger, so she went at once for the water. As she was going, Elijah called after her, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand."

She stopped and turning to him, replied, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake" (or loaf of bread), "but only a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse" (or bottle): "and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it" (or bake it) "for me and for my son, that we may eat it and die."

Poor woman! the rain had not fallen in that country either, so the wheat and other grains had not grown. All food now cost so much that this

widow could buy no more and she had come outside the city wall to pick up a few twigs that she might cook their last meal, thinking that after they had eaten it, they must die because they could get no more. But listen to Elijah's words. He said to her: "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me a little cake of the meal first, and bring it here to me, and afterwards make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The jar of meal shall not waste' (or give out), 'neither shall the cruse of oil fail' (or become empty), 'until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.'"

What wonderful words! Should she really have food given her until she could again buy it? But who *was* this man and if she gave him her very last morsel of food, would there be more for her? She did not stop to ask any of these questions. She did what the prophet asked her to do, as promptly as he had obeyed God's commands. She went to her house, used her last handful of meal and put in her last drop of oil and when the cake was baked, she carried it out to Elijah. Then she returned to her house and found that the prophet's words were indeed true. There was a little more meal in the jar and a little more oil in the cruse, just enough for the cake which she wished to make for herself and for her son. How wonderful this must have seemed to her!

XXXI

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S SON

1 Kings xvii : 17-24

STORY

WHEN the woman found that there really was more meal in her jar and more oil in her cruse, as Elijah had said there would be, she hastened back to him and begged him to come and stay in her home. The prophet was glad to accept this invitation and for over two years he lived with this widow and her son.

Zarephath was built on a hill very near the sea. As there were many rivers and streams in that country, the people had water to drink long after it became scarce in Israel. But as there also the rain did not fall for many months, the fields became parched and dry and nothing would grow.

Elijah lived quietly at the home of this widow and her son and perhaps these restful, peaceful years were the happiest of his life. We know that the widow gave him her best room and I am sure that she tried in every way to make him comfortable. How thankful she must have felt that she had been kind to this stranger when he asked her for food and drink ! Day by day she

found a little more meal in the jar and a little more oil in the cruse—just as much as she needed for that day's food. As she saw from this how the God of Elijah was caring for her, I know that she must have thought much about Him, and I am sure the prophet talked to her of the dear heavenly Father.

I think that Elijah often had her little boy with him and he grew very fond of the dear little fellow. Perhaps he would tell him, as I have been telling you, these wonderful stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; of Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egypt; of the great captain Joshua; of Samuel to whom God spoke when he was a little boy; of David, who killed Goliath and who afterwards became king of God's people; and of Solomon and all his glory. How the boy must have loved to listen to all these interesting stories, and perhaps his mother, also, heard them and learned how God had led His people.

I think that Elijah did not go out by day, lest he should be seen and taken to prison by the servants of wicked Jezebel, but at night he climbed the hills or walked on the seashore. As he watched the waves come rolling in, he thought of God who made the sea, where the fish might live and on which men could sail their ships. And when he looked up at the heavens, he thought of the heavenly Father's goodness in giving the moon and stars, which were like lamps

to guide men at night. He remembered how God had cared for him, keeping him safe from Ahab and Jezebel, sending him first to the brook where he could drink of the water and where the ravens fed him, and then to this kind widow where the food they needed was given them each day. He felt sure that the dear heavenly Father would still care for him and he was ready to obey all His commands and to go where He sent him.

But after he had been for some time in this happy home, a great sorrow came to the widow. Her son, who was her joy and comfort and the only one she had to love and cherish, now that her husband was dead, became very ill and died. The poor mother was in despair. She had thought that she must die with him, when her food was all gone, but then Elijah had come to her and had promised that the meal and oil should last until the rain came again when she could buy more. But now that her dear little boy had been taken from her, she did not care to live.

He had always been so sweet and loving : she thought of his baby days when his first smile and his baby prattle had given her such delight. Then she remembered how she had taught him to walk and the first words he had spoken. All his life he had been so dear and good, and she had thought that when she was old and too feeble to work, he would care for her as she had

cared for him. But now he was gone and it seemed as if she could not live without him.

As she sat there in her grief, Elijah entered the room. I think that he came to ask how the dear little fellow was, not knowing that he had died. The poor mother showed him the dead boy in her arms and exclaimed: "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay" (or kill) "my son?" (that is, "Did you come to make me remember that I have done wrong by sending me this great sorrow?")

She was so overcome by her grief that she did not know what she was saying. Elijah understood her sorrow and he did not answer her wild words but said only, "Give me thy son."

And he took him from her arms, where she was holding him close to her breast, and carried him up to his room and laid him on his own bed. He, too, was greatly grieved; not only did he feel deep sympathy for this poor desolate widow who had been so kind to him, but he had grown to love the dear little boy as if he were his own son. To whom do you think that he turned in his trouble? He went at once to the heavenly Father and cried unto Him: "O Lord my God, hast Thou brought evil upon the widow, also, with whom I sojourn" (or live) "by slaying her son?"

He knew that all Israel was blaming him be-

cause he had said that no rain should fall until he spoke the word, but he could not bear to have this widow feel that he had brought trouble to her, also. Then he prayed that God would give back life to this boy. Never before had one who was dead been made alive but Elijah believed that nothing was too hard for God to do. He placed himself upon the child, as if he would give him of his own life. Then he walked about the room, begging God to hear him and grant his prayer. Again he lay down upon the child, breathing into his mouth his own breath. But still there was no movement in the little body. Elijah would not give up—he prayed even more earnestly, “O God, hear me! O God, hear me and grant my prayer!”

A third time he stretched himself upon the child and prayed, “O Lord my God, I pray Thee let this child's soul come into him again.”

And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah—there was a slight movement, a trembling of the eyelids, the breath came faintly. Then a gentle sigh, the eyes opened and the dear little fellow smiled up into the prophet's face, and Elijah knew that God had answered his prayer. Oh, how glad he was and how thankful he felt to the dear heavenly Father! He took the boy in his arms and carried him down to his mother and said, “See, thy son liveth.”

Was ever a woman so happy before! She

had been so broken-hearted, so crushed by her sorrow that she could scarcely believe her eyes when she looked upon her child and saw that he was alive. As his little arms went round her neck and she pressed him close to her breast, her eyes filled with tears of joy. Turning to Elijah she said, "Now I know that thou art a man of God and that what thou hast told me of the Lord thy God is indeed true."

I am sure that after that she always tried to obey and please the heavenly Father, and all her life she thanked Him for giving her dear son back to her.

XXXII

ELIJAH ALONE AGAINST THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

1 Kings xviii : 1-40

Picture—ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE¹

STORY

BUT Elijah could not remain always in this happy home. When more than two years had passed God again spoke to him and said, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth."

I know that it was hard for him to say good-bye to the widow who had been so kind to him and to leave this pleasant home. The little boy begged that he might go with Elijah and at last his mother consented, for she remembered that it was through the prophet's earnest prayers that he had been given back to her.

As they went through the country, they saw everywhere signs of the terrible drought, for it had been three years and a half since the rain had fallen. No waving corn fields nor leafy vineyards could be seen; no green pastures delighted

¹ The picture of Mount Carmel might also be shown with this story.

the eyes; instead there were only the brown and bare fields. Though it was summer time, the little brooks sang no longer, no lowing of cattle was heard, and even the birds had flown from the leafless trees. Everything was silent and deserted.

As the months had passed, Ahab had searched everywhere for Elijah, by whose word alone God would send the welcome rain. He had even sent to other countries but he could find no trace of him. The Lord had hidden Elijah safely, first by the brook and then in the widow's home. The wicked queen, Jezebel, was so angry because she could not find him that she put to death many of God's prophets, but Obadiah, who was over Ahab's household and who loved the heavenly Father, saved one hundred of them from her, hiding them in caves and sending food to them.

Many of the king's horses and mules had died and, in order to save the others, Ahab started out to search for grass. Though most of the streams had run dry, he thought there might be some rivers in distant parts of his land, along whose banks a little grass might still be found. He called Obadiah and sent him in one direction, while he, himself, went in another. And as Obadiah was going on this errand for the king, Elijah met him. Obadiah was greatly astonished to see the prophet for whom such search had been made. Springing from his chariot, he

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bowed low before him and exclaimed, "Is it *thou*, my lord Elijah?"

And Elijah answered, "It is I: go, tell the king, 'Behold, Elijah is here.'"

But Obadiah was afraid to carry this message. He replied, "Have I sinned that thou desirest the king to kill me? He has searched for thee in all countries and when I tell him thou art here, God will again carry thee out of his way and then he will kill me. I, too, love God and try to please Him. Hast thou not heard how I hid one hundred prophets in caves, so Jezebel could not put them to death? And now thou sendest me to Ahab that he may kill me."

Elijah pitied the frightened man and he said: "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to the king to-day."

After this promise, Obadiah went at once and told Ahab, and the king came to meet Elijah.

And when he saw the prophet, Ahab said, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?"

Elijah was not afraid of the angry king. Calmly he answered: "*I* have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and thou hast followed Baal" (that is, "It is not I who have brought the terrible drought upon this country but it has come because you and your father have not obeyed God, but instead you have worshipped the heathen god Baal"). "Now

therefore," said Elijah, "send and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel and bring the prophets of Baal, also."

Ahab was afraid to disobey the stern prophet, for he believed that only through him would the rain come again, so he sent at once and gathered the Israelites together on Mount Carmel. And he brought there the prophets of Baal, also. It must have taken several days to send word to all the people, and, during this time, Elijah was on Mount Carmel, praying God to help him lead the people back to Himself.

Carmel was the most beautiful mountain in all the country of Israel. From its summit could be seen plains and valleys, with mountains rising beyond them, the highest peaks crowned with snow. The river Kishon flowed at the foot of the mountain and in the distance Jezreel, the summer palace of the king, where Jezebel was now staying, was visible. Westward, as far as eye could reach, the blue waters of the Mediterranean lay shimmering in the sunlight. Usually on the sides of the mountain lovely flowers grew in great profusion, while many trees and ever-green shrubs gave welcome shade. Indeed the very name Carmel means "the Garden of God." But now everything was parched and bare, the trees were leafless and the river bed was dry.

From every direction came the people—thousands and thousands of them. They gathered

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on a rocky terrace of the mountain, wondering why the king had summoned them. The prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty in all, in their white flowing robes and high pointed caps, came up together. Then came the king, in his gorgeous robes, attended by his courtiers, officers and servants.

As they all waited, suddenly the tall, gaunt figure of Elijah was seen, in his rough mantle of camel's hair. He came near to the people and said in a loud voice: "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (that is, "How long will it be before you decide whether you will serve God or not?") "If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."

The people knew that they had done wrong and they answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people: "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let, therefore, two bullocks" (or oxen) "be given to us. Let the prophets of Baal choose one bullock for themselves, and kill it, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under, and I will kill the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

The heathen believed that Baal was the sun-god, or god of fire, and Elijah proposed that

when the prophets of Baal had killed the ox and laid it on an altar, they should ask their god to send down fire and burn it. Elijah, also, would ask the Lord to do this, and which ever one should send the fire, He would be known to be the true God. The people thought this was fair and they shouted, "It is well spoken."

Elijah let the prophets of Baal choose the first bullock, and they laid it on the altar. Then they began to cry to the sun, "O Baal, hear us ! O Baal, hear us !"

They danced about the altar and leaped high in the air. Some ran about with their heads held low, so their long hair dragged on the ground. Others tossed and waved their arms wildly. Hour after hour they cried to Baal, begging him to send the fire. But there was no voice nor any that answered. At noon Elijah began to mock them, saying : "Cry louder ; for surely Baal is a god ; either he is thinking deeply, or he has gone on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened !"

And they cried still louder, "O Baal, hear us ! O Baal, hear us !"

They danced and whirled and ran and leaped more wildly, until they fell exhausted to the ground. But the hours passed and no voice answered, nor did any fire burn up their offering.

At last, as the sun was setting, Elijah said to all the people, "Come near unto me."

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And the people came near. Then he took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel, and he repaired; or built again, the altar of the Lord, which Jezebel had ordered overthrown. He made a trench, or ditch, about this altar and laid some wood upon it. Then he killed the bullock and laid it upon the wood. He then said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it upon the bullock and upon the wood."

Some of those who stood near quickly hastened to a spring which still flowed, and filled the jars and poured the water over the altar. Elijah said, "Do it a second time."

And they did it a second time. Again he spoke, "Do it a third time."

And they did it a third time. And the water ran about the altar and filled even the trench. Then at the hour when the Israelites had been accustomed to pray to God, before they had forsaken Him to worship Baal, Elijah came near the altar and prayed: "O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again" (that is, "that Thou hast made them love Thee again").

As soon as Elijah had finished his prayer, fire

came down from heaven and burned the bullock, the wood, the stones, and dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. In awe and fear the people fell upon their faces. Then they shouted loudly, "The Lord, He is God! the Lord, He is God!"

Then Elijah said, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape."

And they took those wicked prophets, who had led the people to worship Baal instead of the Lord, and put them all to death, so that never again could they lead the people into sin.

XXXIII

THE STILL SMALL VOICE

1 Kings xviii : 41-46 ; xix : 1-18

Picture—ELIJAH FED BY AN ANGEL.—*Doré*

STORY

WHEN the wicked prophets of Baal had been killed, Elijah turned to Ahab and said, "Go and eat, for the rain will soon come."

So the king went to his tent to eat and drink but Elijah had no time for food. He went up to the top of the mountain and there he sent the widow's son to look over the sea, while he prayed to God for rain. Soon the boy came back and said, "Nothing can be seen."

"Go again," said Elijah.

He knelt down and put his face between his knees and earnestly prayed that God would send the rain. But the boy returned and said, "There is nothing."

Again Elijah sent him, and again, until six times he had brought back the discouraging report, "Nothing can be seen."

Meanwhile Elijah continued praying, "O God, Thou hast promised to send the rain. Hear my prayer and send it now."

When the boy went the seventh time, he came running back and said, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, no bigger than a man's hand."

In that country severe storms came up suddenly and all knew what even a tiny cloud might mean. Elijah said: "Go and say to the king, 'Prepare thy chariot and drive quickly to Jezreel, that the rain stop thee not.'"

Ahab mounted his chariot and started at once for his palace, for he well knew that, were the country flooded by rain, he could not get to Jezreel. All that day Elijah had given commands and the king and the people had done as he said. But now, because Ahab was the king, the prophet wished to show him honour, so he tightened his leather girdle about his rough mantle and ran before the king's chariot. In this way did a man show respect and honour to a king in those days.

Before they had gone far, the heaven was black with clouds and there was a great rain. The thunder crashed over their heads and the lightning flashed through the sky. By its light the king could see the tall figure of Elijah easily outrunning the galloping horses. All the twelve long miles to Jezreel, he ran before the chariot, but at the entrance to the city, he suddenly disappeared.

The wicked queen, Jezebel, eagerly inquired for news, as the king entered the palace, and

when she learned that her prophets had not been able to bring down fire upon their altar and that Elijah had had them all put to death, she was terribly angry. She sent a messenger to Elijah saying that she would kill him the next day, as he had killed her prophets. As Elijah had been kept safely by God all through the long years of famine, first by the brook and then at the widow's home, would you not think that he would have trusted the heavenly Father and believed that He would take care of him now? But instead he was very much afraid of the wicked queen and, taking the widow's son with him, he started that very night and left the country of Ahab.

They crossed Judah, also, but still Elijah did not feel safe. He did not wish to take the boy any farther, so he sent him back to his home and he, himself, went far into the desert. At last he threw himself down under a tree and there he begged God to let him die, for he was completely discouraged. He had thought that after his splendid victory over the prophets of Baal, the king and all the people of Israel would turn to God and worship and serve Him, but instead, his own life was threatened (that is, Jezebel said that she would kill him).

Instead of letting him die, as he prayed to do, the loving heavenly Father sent a deep sleep upon him. God knew that Elijah was very

weary, for he had had the exciting day on Mount Carmel, the swift run before Ahab's chariot, and now this long journey into the wilderness. He had also been without food and rest for many hours. When he had slept for a long time, an angel touched him and said, "Arise and eat."

And he looked and, behold, there was a cake (or small loaf of bread) baked on some coals of fire, and a cruse of water standing near him. And he ate and drank and lay down again. After he had had another long sleep, once more the heavenly Father sent His angel, who touched him and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee."

God knew that he needed nourishing food before he could take another long journey. He arose and ate, and so wonderful was that food that he needed no more for forty days. After a long journey he came at last to Mount Horeb and there he went into a cave. Here God spoke to him and asked, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

God had given him work to do far, far away at Ahab's court and here he was among the mountains. But Elijah began to explain: "I have tried hard to serve Thee, O Lord God of hosts, and I have done all I could for Thy people, the Israelites, but they have forsaken Thee. They have thrown down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets; and I, even I only, am left; and now they seek my life to take it away."

God did not answer him but said only, "Go out and stand upon the mountain."

First there came a great and strong wind—a terrible hurricane—that tore the branches from the trees and even broke off great pieces of rocks and sent them hurling down the sides of the mountain. So terrific was the wind that Elijah went back into the cave to escape from its fury. But the Lord was not in the wind. Then came a dreadful earthquake that shook the mountain, as a ship is shaken by a great storm at sea. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then came a terrible storm, the thunder crashed and the lightning blazed, so it seemed as if the whole mountain was on fire. But the Lord was not in the fire.

The storm died down, the wind ceased and all was calm once more. Then Elijah heard a murmur like a still, small voice. He wrapped his mantle about his face and went out to the entrance of the cave and there God asked him once more, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

Again he replied as before: "I have tried hard to serve Thee, O Lord God of hosts, and I have done all I could for Thy people, the Israelites, but they have forsaken Thee, thrown down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets, and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

But the Lord sent him back to work for Him,

because He knew that in this way would he best get over his discouragement. He said: "Go, return and anoint other men to be kings over Israel and over Syria. Anoint Elisha, also, to be prophet in thy place. These three shall all work for Me and help to bring My people back to Me."

Then God told Elijah that he was not the only one who worshipped Him, as he had thought, for there were seven thousand people in Israel who still loved and served Him. I am sure that Elijah was sorry he had been discouraged and had run away from Jezebel, and he went at once back to Israel to do as God commanded.

XXXIV

THREE GREAT BATTLES

1 Kings xx : 1-30 ; 2 Chron. xvii-xx

STORY

SOME time after the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, marched against Israel. He had kings of many small countries with him and a very large army. Ahab was greatly frightened, and he and all his chief men hastened to Samaria, which had the strongest walls about it. Then Ben-hadad sent messengers to Ahab, saying, "You must give me your silver and gold, and your children to be my slaves."

Ahab was afraid to fight against such a strong army, so he sent back this message, "I am yours and all that I have" (that is, "You may take anything you like which belongs to me").

But then the king of Syria sent even a worse message. He said, "To-morrow I will send my servants to Samaria and they shall search your house and the houses of all your nobles and take whatever they like."

When Ahab received this message, he called all the chief men of Israel together and told them what message Ben-hadad had sent. They at

once said: "Do not allow him to do this: we will fight him rather than let him take our treasures."

When the king of Syria heard that Ahab would not yield to his demands, he sent word that he would entirely destroy the city. But Ahab said to the messenger: "Tell your king, 'Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off'" (that is, "Wait until you have won a victory, before you boast, or brag, about it").

The Syrian king was so sure of winning that he stayed in his tent, drinking with the other kings, and sent his soldiers against the city. Then a prophet came to Ahab and told him that God would let him defeat the great army of the Syrians and that the young men of Israel should march against the enemy. So Ahab called together all the young men and found that there were two hundred and fifty of them, and he had also seven thousand other soldiers.

The weather was very warm and one day at noon, the hottest part of the day, these brave young men marched against the Syrians. Ben-hadad and the other kings had been drinking and neither they nor the soldiers were ready to fight. When Ben-hadad was told that some Israelites were coming against him, he said, "Take them alive."

But instead of being captured, the young men

attacked the Syrians, who were terrified and started to flee. Then the rest of Ahab's army overtook them and killed many of them. Ben-hadad, himself, had hard work to escape. Then the prophet came again to Ahab and said, "The Syrians will return next year, so be ready to fight them."

The friends of Ben-hadad told him: "Israel's god is the god of the hills, so that is why they won the battle. But if you march against them once more and fight in the plains, then you will win."

The next year the Syrians came again, and this time Ahab and his soldiers marched out to meet them. But the Israelites were so few that the Bible tells us that they were like two little flocks of kids, while the Syrians seemed to cover the whole country. Then came the prophet to Ahab and said: "Thus saith the Lord, 'Because the Syrians have said, "The god of the Israelites is a god of the hills, but he is not a god of the valleys," therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thy hand and ye shall know that I am the Lord.'"

So again the Israelites had a great victory and many thousands of the Syrians were killed, and even the king, Ben-hadad, was taken prisoner. But though God had given Ahab and the Israelites these two great victories, they did not thank nor praise Him for His goodness to them.

And now I wish to tell you what was happening in Judah all this time. You remember that Rehoboam had treated the people so cruelly that many had left him and chosen another king. Both Rehoboam and his son were wicked all their lives and did not try to please God. But the next king, Asa, was different. He destroyed all the altars which had been built to heathen gods and he and his people worshipped God alone. The Bible tells us that he did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord.

When he died, his son, Jehoshaphat, became king, and he, like his father, did what was right in God's eyes. He was very different from the wicked kings of Israel, for he helped his people to worship God, instead of Baal. The Bible tells us that the Lord blessed him and gave him honour and riches.

He sent priests to the different cities to teach the people God's laws, and he, himself, travelled among his people and told them of all that the dear heavenly Father had done for them, and he helped them to worship Him. He appointed judges, also, and said to them: "Consider what ye do, for ye judge not for man but for the Lord, and He is with you in giving judgment."

So when the people had trouble, these judges helped them settle all their difficulties. But in just one thing Jehoshaphat did wrong. He

went to Israel and became friends with Ahab, and allowed his son to marry that wicked king's daughter. Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat to join him in a battle against Syria. But this time the Lord allowed the king of Syria to win and Ahab was killed and many of the Israelites, also. But the Lord kept Jehoshaphat safe in the battle and he went back to his country. There a prophet came to him and told him how wrong it was for him to join the wicked king Ahab. Jehoshaphat was very sorry that he had done this, and after that he always tried to please God.

Some time later other enemies came against Judah—a great multitude of Moabites and Ammonites. Jehoshaphat called all the people together that they might ask God to help them. And Jehoshaphat stood in the beautiful Temple, which Solomon had built, and he prayed: "O Lord, the God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? And art not Thou Ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? And in Thy hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee" (that is, "No one has more power than Thou"). "And now, behold, the people of Moab and Ammon have come to attack us and we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee, and wilt Thou not hear and save us?"

And all the men of Judah, with their wives

and their children, stood before the Lord and prayed to Him. Then God sent one of His prophets to them and he said: "Hearken ye" (or listen) "all Judah, and thou King Jehoshaphat: Thus saith the Lord unto you, 'Fear not, neither be dismayed on account of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow go ye down against them: ye shall find them in the valley. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: stand ye still, and see what the Lord will do for you. Fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord is with you.'"

And Jehoshaphat and all Judah bowed down and worshipped the Lord and sang praises to Him for His goodness to them. And they rose early the next morning and marched out against the enemy. Before they started Jehoshaphat told them to believe all that God had promised them. As they marched, the singers went before the army and sang praises to God, saying, "Give thanks unto the Lord, for His loving-kindness endureth" (or lasteth) "forever."

Meanwhile the people of Ammon and of Moab quarrelled among themselves and fought one another. So when the people of Judah reached them, they had no need to fight, as God had promised them, for their enemies were all dead. They found rich armour and precious jewels and many treasures in the camp which they carried home with them. As they returned, they again

sang praises to God and thanked Him for giving them this great victory. And after that Jehoshaphat had peace and rest from all his enemies.

XXXV

THE CHARIOT OF FIRE

1 Kings xix : 19-21 ; 2 Kings ii : 1-15 ; Luke ix : 28-30

Picture—ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN.—*Doré*

STORY

AFTER hearing the still, small voice on Mount Horeb, Elijah returned at once to the land of Israel. He was no longer afraid of the wicked queen Jezebel, for God had sent him to do work for Him. How beautiful the country must have looked to him, for the recent rains had softened the ground so the grass and flowers once more adorned the fields and the new leaves covered the trees with their delicate green. The sheep were feeding in the meadows and the farmers were sowing their seed.

Elijah went first to the home of a man named Shaphat. This man was wealthy and his place was called "the meadow of the dance," because the young people used to come there for their festivals and merry times. With all others in Israel, he had suffered from the terrible drought, but now that the rain had come, he had at once

begun his plowing. Such a queer plow as they used in those days! It was only a strong branch of a tree to which another shorter, pointed branch was attached. This pointed branch was dragged along the ground, and by going over and over the same furrow, at last the hard earth was turned over and softened. These plows were drawn by oxen instead of horses.

In Shaphat's field twelve plows were at work and the last one was driven by his son Elisha. He was having a happy time over his work, laughing and talking with the men who drove the other plows and not dreaming that any change was to come into his life. But suddenly Elijah entered the field and without speaking, he cast his mantle over Elisha. How well Elisha remembered this wonderful man, for, with the other Israelites, he saw the terrible scenes on Mount Carmel. He knew that Elijah meant, by throwing his mantle over him, that he was to go with him as his helper.

After leaving his mantle, Elijah quickly passed on, and at first Elisha was too surprised to move. But he soon recovered from his astonishment and running after the prophet, he said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother and then I will follow thee."

Elijah told him to go back but to remember that he was called to God's service. It must have been hard for Shaphat and his wife to let

their son go from them, but I am sure they loved the dear heavenly Father and were glad to have Elisha chosen to serve God's great prophet. Elisha made a fire with the plow, which he should never use again, and prepared a farewell feast to which he invited his father and mother and all his friends. Then, when all had wished him well and rejoiced that he had been chosen for this great work, he kissed his dear father and mother good-bye and went after Elijah.

The Bible tells us that he ministered unto him and also that he poured water on his hands. In those days people did not dip their hands into water, unless it was the water of a brook or river. Instead a servant or friend would pour it over their hands. How glad Elijah, who was now growing old, must have been to have this loving, helpful young man with him, and how much Elisha must have learned of God and of His laws from the old prophet.

During the next years Elijah was busy teaching young men about God. You remember that Samuel had started many schools where young men could learn of God's laws, so they might teach them to the people. These schools had been closed, when the Israelites worshipped Baal, but now Elijah opened them again and he taught in them, as Samuel had done. God gave him other work to do, also, sending him to Ahab to reprove him for a great wrong which he had

done, and after this king's death, he was given a message to Ahab's son. Elijah carried the Lord's messages without fear, as he had always done, and he served Him with all his heart.

After Elijah and Elisha had spent seven years together, it came time for Elijah to go to the dear heavenly Father. He wished to see all the young men in the schools once more, for he loved them like sons, so he and Elisha went first to Gilgal. After speaking to the young men there, the aged prophet said to Elisha, "Tarry" (or wait) "here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha, too, knew that Elijah was to be taken from him and he wished to be with him as long as possible, so he replied, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

So they went down to Bethel. Here the young men in the school, whom, also, God had told that Elijah was soon to be taken from them, said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?"

Elisha loved Elijah dearly and he couldn't bear to think of his leaving him, so he replied, "Yea" (yes), "I know it; hold ye your peace" (that is, "Do not talk about it").

Again Elijah turned to his faithful friend and said, "Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho."

But Elisha replied as before, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

(How near the Lord was to these two. Elijah kept saying, "The Lord sends me to this place," and Elisha always replied, "As the Lord liveth, I will not leave thee.") So they came to Jericho. Here, too, the young men, not wishing to speak to Elijah on the subject, came to Elisha and said, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?"

And Elisha made the same reply, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace."

And Elijah said unto him the third time, "Tarry here, Elisha, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to the Jordan."

But Elisha cried out more earnestly than before, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

And they two went on until they reached the Jordan. But the river was too deep to cross and there was no bridge. Elijah knew, however, that his way lay right ahead, so he took his hairy mantle and wrapping it together, he struck the waters and they were divided, so a dry path was made, on which he and Elisha crossed. Thus Elijah came to the country where he had spent his boyhood days and he must have been glad to see it once more. He now turned to Elisha, his faithful friend, who would not leave

him, and said, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken from thee."

Elisha did not ask for riches nor long life nor indeed anything for himself. Instead, he said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (that is, "Let it be known that I am like a son to thee, so that I, too, may be such a prophet as thou hast been").

Elijah replied: "Thou hast asked a hard thing, because God, and not I, must grant it, but if thou seest me when I am taken from thee, then thou mayest know that God has given thee thy desire; but if thou dost not see me, it shall not be given thee."

Then the two had a last beautiful talk together. How many messages and directions Elijah must have had to give to this dear friend who should soon take his place. Perhaps he told him also of the wonderful scene on Mount Horeb and how he had learned that God comes as a soft, gentle voice to His children and not in wind, earthquake or fire, so he had been quietly teaching the young men in the schools, instead of again attempting to overthrow the worship of Baal, as he did on Mount Carmel.

And as they talked, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated them, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha fell on his knees and looking up towards Elijah, he cried, "My father, my father,

the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" that is, "Just as chariots and horsemen are a great protection to a nation, so thou hast protected Israel."

Then the whirlwind carried Elijah out of sight and Elisha saw him no more. He tore his clothes (which you remember was the way that people showed their sorrow in those days), for he was in great grief because he had lost his dear friend who had been like a father to him. But he was determined to try to take his place, so taking up Elijah's mantle, which had fallen from him, he went back to the Jordan. Here he struck the water with this mantle and said, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?"

And the waters parted for him, as they had done for the older prophet, and he went across on the dry path. When the young prophets at Jericho, who had watched the waters divide for Elijah, saw them now part again, they said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha" (that is, "Elisha is now a great prophet like Elijah").

And they came and bowed reverently, as they would have done to Elijah. And Elisha told them of the wonderful way in which God had taken Elijah to heaven.

Only once more was Elijah seen in this world. Many, many years after this, when Jesus was on earth, He took Peter and James and John, His disciples, up on a high mountain to pray. And as

He prayed, His clothing became dazzling white and His face was so bright that His disciples could not look upon Him. And they saw both Moses and Elijah talking with Him. Because Elijah had always done God's will on earth, he was allowed to come from heaven to talk with the dear Saviour.

XXXVI

ELISHA, THE HELPER

2 Kings ii: 19-22 ; iv: 1-7, 38-44 ; vi: 1-7

STORY

THE city of Jericho was called the Garden of the Lord because it had such rich soil, such beautiful palms and such wide-spreading fig and mulberry trees. Many springs of water refreshed the air and the balsam plants shed a delicious perfume. But there was one great trouble. The water was bitter and unfit to drink ; not only were the people and cattle made ill from using it, but even the fruit trees dropped their blossoms, so the fruit did not form.

When Elisha reached the city, after crossing the Jordan, the people came to him and said : " Thou seest how pleasant our city is, but the water is not good and we know not what to do to make it better."

Elisha said, " Bring me a new dish filled with salt."

And they brought it to him. And he went to the spring, from which the water came, and threw the salt into it and said : " Thus saith the Lord, ' I have healed these waters.' "

(He spoke just as if the waters had been sick and God had made them well.) It does not seem as if salt would improve water, does it? You know that we cannot drink the water of the ocean because it is salty, but God made this spring fresh and sweet after Elisha had thrown the salt in and had thus spoken. And even to-day, should you go to Jericho, you would find one spring of delicious water, which is still called Elisha's Fountain, while all the other springs near there have bitter water.

One time a poor woman came to Elisha and told him of her great distress. Her husband had been one of the prophets in the schools which Elijah had started, but he had died owing some money. She was too poor to pay this debt and the man, to whom her husband owed it, was going to take her two sons to be bondmen, or servants. Elisha had no money to spare but he was very sorry for her and asked: "What shall I do for thee? Tell me, what hast thou in the house?"

She replied: "I have nothing in the house except a cruse (or bottle) of oil."

Then Elisha said: "Go, borrow empty dishes of all thy neighbours; borrow as many as possible. And thou shalt go in and shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and pour out into all these dishes; and thou shalt set aside that which is full."

The woman returned to her home and did just

as Elisha had told her. She sent her sons to borrow as many dishes of her neighbours as they would lend her and when she had them all in her house, she shut the door and began to pour oil from her own cruse into them. As the dishes were filled, her sons brought more and more and she kept pouring out the oil. But at last, when she said, "Bring me another dish," they replied, "There are no more." Then, and not till then, did the oil stop flowing.

She went at once to Elisha and told him of this wonderful thing that had happened. And he said, "Go sell the oil and pay thy debt, and keep the rest for thyself and thy sons."

How grateful she must have been to the dear heavenly Father, who had helped her through His prophet, so that now her dear sons need not become servants and she would be poor no longer.

Elisha visited the schools of the prophets, as Elijah had done, and taught the young men about God. One day, after they had been listening to his teaching, Elisha told his servant to put a pot on the fire and they would have some pottage, or thick soup, for their dinner. There had been a famine again in the land (that means there had been no rain, so nothing would grow) and the prophets had little to eat. But one of them had gone out into the fields and had gathered herbs to put into the soup. By mistake

he had picked some wild gourds, also, which were poisonous, and these, too, were put into the pot. But when the prophets sat down to eat and tasted the pottage, they cried out, "Oh, man of God" (that was another name by which Elisha was called), "there is death in the pot!" (that is, "The pot has poison in it and we shall all die!")

But Elisha said, "Bring me some meal."

When they brought it, he threw it into the pot and then said, "Now you can eat the pottage and it will not hurt you."

And they ate it and found it very good, and it did them no harm.

Then Elisha visited some other young prophets and there he learned that so many had joined their school that they needed a larger place in which to live, so they asked him to stay with them while they built it. They went to the Jordan river and each one cut down a tree in order to get wood to build this house.

It chanced that one of the prophets did not have an ax, so he had borrowed one, and as he was busily chopping a tree, the head of the ax fell off and dropped into the river. He cried out, "Alas, my master! it was borrowed." (That is, "What shall I do, for it was not mine!")

Elisha asked, "Where did it fall?"

And the young man showed him the place. Then Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the

river and the iron rose to the surface and floated upon the water. Was not that wonderful? Elisha said to the young man, "Take it up."

And he put his hand into the water and caught the ax-head, and I am sure that he thanked Elisha for getting it for him.

I want to tell you of one other wonderful thing which Elisha did. One day a man came to him with a present of twenty loaves of barley bread and some ears of corn. A number of poor people were with the prophet and he turned to his servant and said, "Give this present, which has been brought to me, to the people, so that they, too, may enjoy it."

But the servant replied, "What! Shall I set these twenty loaves and few ears of corn before a hundred people?"

But Elisha said once more: "Give them to the people that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, 'They shall eat and shall leave thereof'" (that is, "There shall be more than they can eat").

So the servant passed the bread and corn to the people and what God had said really happened. The people ate all they wished and still some of the food was left.

XXXVII

THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON

2 Kings iv : 8-37 ; viii : 1-6

Picture—ELISHA RAISES THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON.
—*Julius von Schnorr*

STORY

ELISHA was unlike Elijah in many ways. He did not wear a shaggy mantle nor have his hair long but looked and dressed as others did. Instead of living among the mountains or by himself, as his great master had done, he loved to be near people. He had a house in Samaria, where he often stayed, but, as we heard in our last story, he spent much time in going to the different schools where he taught the young prophets.

On his journeys he often passed through a small town, called Shunem, where lived a rich woman. Both she and her husband loved and served God and they did much good with their money. As Elisha passed her house, this woman would always ask him to come in and take a meal with them, which he was very glad to do.

After he had been with them a number of times, this woman went to her husband and

said: "Behold now, I perceive" (or I see) "that this is a holy man of God that passeth by continually" (or very often). "Let us have a small room made on the roof, in which he can stay; and let us put in it a bed, a table, a seat, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither" (or stay in this room).

Was it not very kind and generous of her to think of doing this for Elisha? Her husband was quite willing, so the little room was built on the roof, the pleasantest place in their house, and in it were put all that the prophet would need; a bed, a table, a comfortable chair, or couch, and a candle. There was an outside stairway to the roof, so Elisha could go to his room without disturbing any one in the house.

He appreciated the woman's kindness very much and wished to do something for her. One day, after he had been resting in his pleasant little room, he asked his servant to call her. When she came and bowed low before him, he said: "Thou hast done so much for me; what can I do for thee? Dost thou desire any favour, for which I can ask the king or the captain of his army?"

But she replied, "I dwell among mine own people" (that is, "My relatives and friends are near me and I have all that I need").

Then, thanking the prophet, she left him.

He turned to Gehazi, his servant, and asked, "What is there that I can do for her?"

And Gehazi answered, "She has no children and I think that she would rather have a little boy than anything else in the world."

Elisha said, "Call her once more."

When she came, he said, "I will pray to God and He will give thee a little son."

The sweet woman could hardly believe what she heard. She had so longed for this great gift and she had thought it was never to be hers. It seemed too good to be true that she should really have a little child of her own, so she replied, "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not deceive thy handmaid" (that is, "Do not promise me this, unless it is really to happen").

But after a time a dear little boy did come to her, as Elisha had said. I cannot tell you of the mother's joy. It was all the greater because, for so long a time, she had desired a child. How she watched over the dear baby and how tenderly she cared for him, and then what a joy it was to her to hear his first lisping words and to see him toddling about the room. She loved him so much that she could hardly bear to have him out of her sight, and I know that she must often have thanked the heavenly Father for giving her this little child.

As he grew older he liked to go out into the fields and watch his father and the other men as

they plowed and sowed and reaped the grain. One morning he went out with his father to watch the reapers. It was a very hot day and suddenly the little boy cried out, "Oh, my head, my head!"

The father thought he had only a headache, so, calling a servant, he said, "Carry him to his mother."

But though she did all in her power for him, he grew worse and worse, and at noon he died in her arms. Her grief was terrible. He had come into her lonely life like a ray of sunshine and now must she lose him! She remembered Elisha, who had asked God to give him to her, and she thought that, even though he were dead, the prophet's prayers might make him live again. So very quietly she carried him up to the little room on the roof, laid him on the prophet's bed and closed the door.

Then she went out and calling her husband, she asked him to send her one of the servants and an ass, as she wished to go to the man of God who was on Mount Carmel. Her husband was surprised at her request and asked, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath" (the times when Elisha taught the people or when they worshipped God with him).

She simply answered, "It shall be well," and said nothing of the little boy's death.

When the ass was ready, she said to the servant who ran by her side, "Drive, and go forward; slacken me not the riding, except I bid thee" (that is, "Drive as fast as you can and stop for nothing").

But at the fastest speed they could go, how long the journey seemed to the anxious mother. If only she could reach the man of God, she felt sure that he could help her in her great trouble.

When she was still far off, Elisha saw her coming and said to his servant: "Behold, yonder is the Shunammite: run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?"

But the poor mother could not tell her trouble to Gehazi, so she answered only, "It is well," and hurried on to Elisha. And when she came to him, she threw herself upon the ground and clasped his feet. Elisha saw that she was in great distress and he longed to help her. At last she sobbed out, "Did I desire a son of my Lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?"

Then the prophet thought that the little boy must be very ill. He called his servant and giving him his staff, he told him to go quickly and lay it upon the child. I think that he hoped thus to make him well. But the poor mother still clung to him and said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

She felt that she must have Elisha himself come with her to restore her child, if possible. So Elisha went with her and as they neared the house, after the long journey, Gehazi, who had put the staff upon the little boy, met them and said, "The child is not awaked."

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went into his room and shut the door and prayed unto the Lord. Then he did as his great master had done, when he brought back to life the widow's son, he lay down upon the boy, putting his mouth upon the boy's mouth, his eyes upon the boy's eyes, and his hands upon the boy's hands, as if he would give of his own life to the dead child. And as he lay thus, a little warmth came into the child's flesh.

Then Elisha arose and walked about the room, beseeching the heavenly Father to give back life to this dear little boy. Once more he lay down upon him and after a few moments the child opened his eyes. Oh, how full of thankfulness and gladness was the prophet's heart! Not only had he sympathized deeply with the poor mother in her terrible affliction, but he, too, had grieved for the child because he had learned to love him dearly, and now it was such a joy to see him alive once more.

He sent Gehazi to call the mother and when she came in, he said, "Take up thy son."

She glanced towards the bed and saw her darling alive. Overcome with joy, she fell at the prophet's feet and tried to thank him. Then gathering her little son into her arms and pressing him close to her bosom, she left the room.

Elisha always felt an interest in this Shunammite woman because of her kindness to him. Some time after this, he went to her and said that the Lord had told him that there would be a famine in Israel for seven years, and he advised her to take her son and to go into some other country. As her husband was dead and she had to take care of herself, she was especially grateful for Elisha's kindness. She at once took her son and went to the country of the Philistines, where she remained until the famine was over.

But when she returned, at the end of the seven years, she found that her home and all her property had been sold and was now in the king's possession (that is, he owned it). She went to him, therefore, and just before she reached the palace, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, had been speaking of all the wonderful things which the prophet had done. Among them Gehazi told the king of the Shunammite's son, whom, with God's help, Elisha had brought back from death. Just at this moment he looked up and exclaimed, "Why, here is the woman, of whose son I have just been speaking!"

She, too, told the king, as Gehazi had done,

how God had given her back her son from death through Elisha's prayers. Then she told him of her leaving her home on account of the famine, and of her property being sold while she was away. The king at once called an officer and said, "Give back to this woman her house and her land, and pay her, also, for all the fruits of the field" (that is, for any grain that has grown) "from the day that she left the land even until now."

So the dear heavenly Father cared for this woman all her life because she was so kind to His prophet Elisha.

XXXVIII

NAAMAN AND THE LITTLE ISRAELITISH MAID

2 Kings v : 1-19

Picture—GROUP OF LEPERS

STORY

WE have heard in our stories of the Syrians, one of the nations near Israel. The captain of the army of the Syrians was named Naaman. He was a great man, as his office was the highest in the land next to that of the king himself. He was very brave and had won many battles, so both the king and the Syrians were proud of him. But he was a leper, that is, he had a most terrible disease called leprosy. In Israel all lepers had to go away by themselves so others should not take this disease. No cure for it was known and those having it grew worse and worse until they died. All the Syrians were distressed because Naaman had this disease and they longed to help him, but no one knew what to do.

The Syrians and Israelites had frequent battles and when they were not actually fighting together, bands, or companies, of Syrians would go

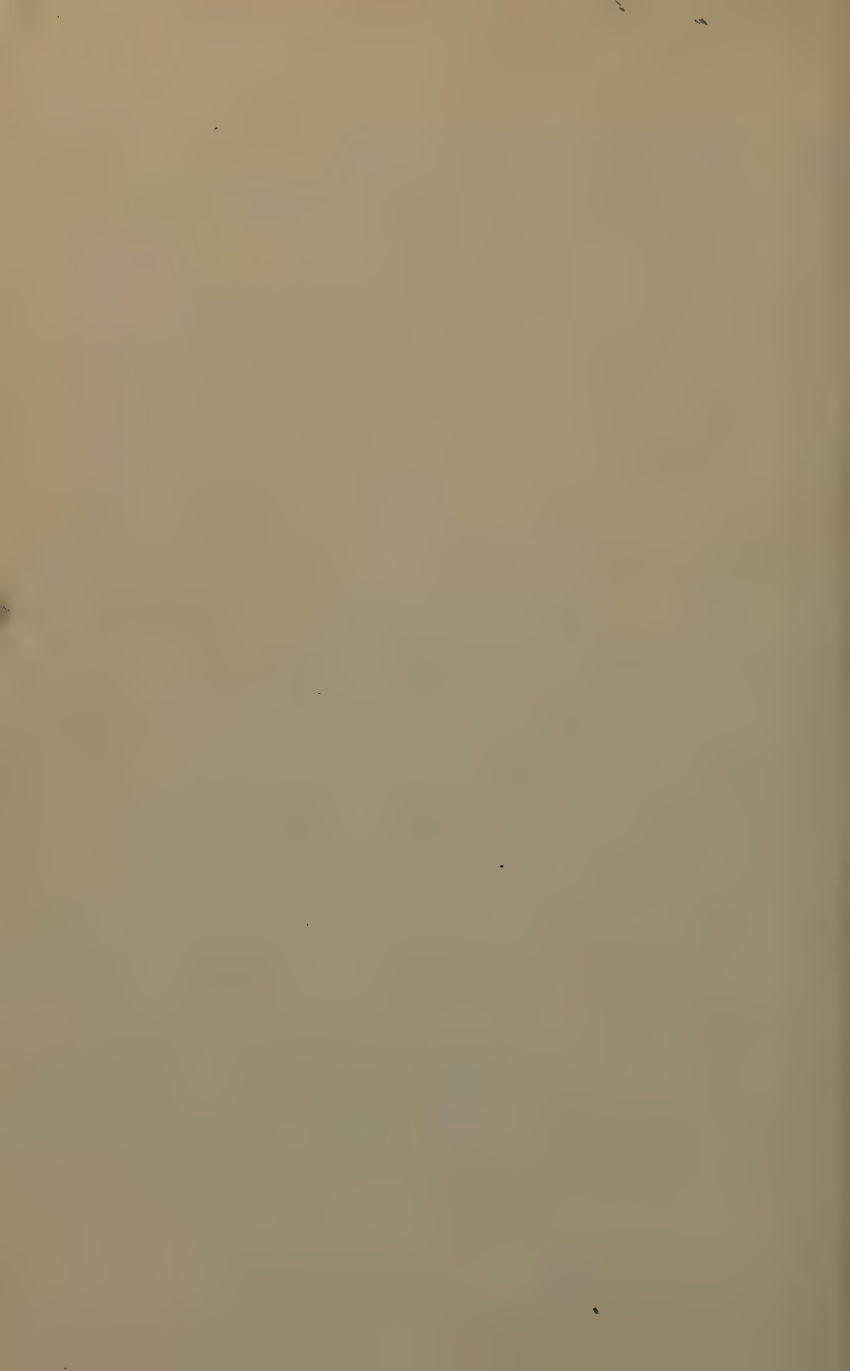
into the land of Israel and steal cattle and sheep, and sometimes even people, whom they carried away to be their slaves. On one of these raids they carried away, as a captive, a little girl. How sad her mother and the others of her family must have felt to have her taken from them and how earnestly they must have prayed to God, asking Him to keep her safe in that foreign land. And God answered their prayer and not only sent her where she was kindly treated but gave her work to do for Him.

The great captain Naaman took her into his home to be his wife's little maid. He was very kind to every one and all his servants loved him. The little girl felt sorry, as all others did, that he had such a dreadful disease. She had often heard of the prophet Elisha and one day she said to her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria" (that is, "I so wish that my master Naaman might go to Elisha") "for he would recover" (or heal) "him of his leprosy."

Then I think that she told her mistress of the wonderful acts which Elisha had done with God's help—how he had made the waters of the Jordan divide, the widow's oil increase, and the bitter water at Jericho sweet, and, most wonderful of all, how he had brought back to life the Shunammite's little son. One of Naaman's officers happened to hear what the little girl said and he



SAMARIA. GROUP OF LEPERS



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thought, "Perhaps this prophet could cure my dear master."

He went at once to the king and told him that a little maid from the land of Israel had said that a prophet in that country could cure Naaman. The king was delighted at the news, for he loved his great captain and had been so troubled because he had this dreadful disease. He sent for him and told him to go immediately to Joram, who was the king of Israel. "I will write a letter to him," he said, "which thou shalt take."

So Naaman started, taking the king's letter and rich presents for the king of Israel and for the prophet—gold and silver and many beautiful garments. He had a number of chariots and a great retinue, or company, of officers and soldiers besides his own attendants and servants. He went to the king of Israel and gave him the letter from the king of Syria. King Joram opened it and read, "With this letter I send my servant Naaman to thee that thou mayest recover" (or cure) "him of his leprosy."

When the king of Israel read these words, he tore his robe, which you remember people did when in great trouble, and said: "Am I God to kill or make alive that this man doth send to me to recover a man of his leprosy! He only seeks a quarrel with me, so he can fight me."

In his trouble he forgot the Lord who could heal disease and he did not think of sending to

his prophet. But when Elisha heard of Naaman's coming, he sent his servant to the king to say to him: "Wherefore hast thou rent" (or torn) "thy robe? Let this captain come to me and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

So Naaman came with his chariots and horses and with all his company in their splendid robes and stood at the door of Elisha's house. But the prophet did not come out to see him. I think he wished Naaman to know that it was God alone who could cure him, so he sent his servant Gehazi with this message, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean" (or made well).

When Naaman received this message, he was very angry and he said: "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and heal me.' Are not the rivers of Damascus" (the city in Syria where he lived) "better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?"

He had expected that the prophet would treat him with the same honour and reverence with which every one in his own country treated him and he was very angry because Elisha had sent only a message to him. The rivers in Syria were much more beautiful than the Jordan and he thought that, if washing in a river would cure him, he would better wash in those in his own

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land. So he turned from Elisha's door and went away in a rage.

But his attendants longed to have their dear master well again, so now they came to him and said: "My father" (they loved him as if they had been his own sons), "if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith to thee, 'Wash, and be clean.'"

Naaman saw how foolish he had been, so he drove at once to the Jordan. He dipped under the water once but he came up just the same as he went in. He went in again but there was no change. Once more he dipped under, a fourth time, a fifth, a sixth, but the dreadful disease was still upon him. A seventh time he went under and behold, when he came up, his flesh looked soft and fair and rosy like the flesh of a little child and he was healed. Oh, how glad and thankful he was and how his attendants and servants and all his company rejoiced with him!

He drove quickly back to Elisha's home and going in, he said to the prophet: "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (that is, "I know that the God of Israel is the only true God"). Then he said, "I pray thee, take a present from thy servant."

But Elisha replied, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none."

Naaman urged him to accept it but he refused. Elisha did not want Naaman to think that he could pay him for what the Lord had done for him. Then Naaman told Elisha that he should always worship the Lord, instead of the gods of his land. Elisha bade him good-bye, saying, "Go in peace," and he went back to Syria. There the king and all the people rejoiced over his wonderful cure and I am sure Naaman was very glad that the little Israelitish maid had come into his home.

XXXIX

THE HEAVENLY HOST

2 Kings vi: 8-33; vii: 1-16

Picture—FAMINE IN SAMARIA RELIEVED

STORY

SOME time after Naaman had been cured of his leprosy, trouble broke out again between Syria and Israel. The king of Syria sent a company of his soldiers to a place where he had learned that Joram, the king of Israel, was to hunt, hoping to take him captive (that is, to make him his prisoner). But the Lord told Elisha of this plan, so the prophet sent word to Joram not to go to that place to hunt. Joram did not go, therefore, but instead he sent a messenger and found that the soldiers of the king of Syria were indeed there, as Elisha had said they would be.

A little later the king of Syria tried again to capture the king of Israel and once more Elisha warned him of this danger. Several times this happened and at last the king of Syria thought that some one in his camp must be a traitor (that is, that some one was telling his plans to the Israelites), and he was much troubled. He called

his attendants and servants together and asked, "Will you not tell me who of you is for the king of Israel?" (that is, who is helping him?)

One of them answered, "None of us, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth his king all that thou desirest to keep most secret."

Then the king said to a servant, "Go and find out where the prophet is and I will send and take him prisoner."

The messenger soon returned, saying, "Behold, he is in Dothan."

This place, which stood on a green hill with higher hills all about it, was not far from Samaria. The king of Syria sent chariots and horses and many soldiers, by night and they surrounded Dothan, so that no one could go out of the city. The next morning Elisha's servant arose early and when he went out, he saw this great company of soldiers. He returned quickly to Elisha and said, "Alas, my master! what shall we do?"

Do you think that Elisha was afraid? Oh, no, he was not at all troubled and he said to his servant: "Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them" (that is, "There are more of God's angels with us than there are soldiers of the Syrians"). Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, I pray Thee, open my servant's eyes that he may see."

And the Lord gave the servant greater sight

and he looked up and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Then the servant feared no more and soon he and the prophet went boldly out to the Syrian soldiers. Then Elisha again prayed, "I pray Thee, make these men blind" (that is, "Confuse them, so they will not know where they are going").

Elisha went up to them and said, "Do you wish to find Elisha? I will show you where he is."

He then led them to Samaria. When they were all within that walled city and the gates were shut, Elisha prayed again and asked God to open their eyes, so they might know where they were. When they found that, instead of taking Elisha prisoner, they themselves were all prisoners in Samaria, how frightened they must have been. The king of Israel surrounded them with his soldiers and cried out to Elisha, "Shall I kill them?"

But Elisha replied: "Thou shalt not kill them; instead, set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink before they return to their master."

So the king made a great feast and invited the Syrians to it and when they had finished eating, he sent them back to their king. How surprised they must have been to be treated so kindly, instead of being killed. When they returned to

their country and told their king all that had happened, he said, "I will not fight against the Israelites any more."

But after a long, long time the king of Syria forgot the kindness which had been shown to his soldiers and he marched against Israel. He took many cities and at last the king of Israel and all his people had to stay in Samaria, which the Syrian army surrounded. This city had very strong walls, so the Syrians could not enter, but they prevented any food being brought from outside into the city. So, after many weeks and months had passed, there was almost nothing to eat. The people suffered and died from hunger and no one knew what to do. The king at last went to Elisha and said: "God will not help us, so I shall open the gates and let the Syrians come in, for it will be better to be killed by them than for all of us to die of hunger."

Elisha answered: "Hear ye the word of the Lord: 'To-morrow, about this time, shall a measure'" (or a peck and a half) "'of fine flour be sold for a shekel'" (about sixty-five cents) "'and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.'" "

The king and those who were with him thought that such a thing as this was impossible. Even a piece of meat so poor that ordinarily it was not considered fit to eat had been sold for eighty dollars and no one could get flour or

barley for any money: how then should they have enough to sell these so cheaply the very next day!

That evening, just at twilight, four lepers were sitting at the gate of Samaria. As I told you, those who had this dreadful disease in Israel had to go off by themselves, so these poor men were not allowed to enter the gates. They had to beg for their food, but now the people in Samaria had no food even for themselves, so they could not give any to beggars. These lepers, therefore, were starving and they said to each other: "Let us go to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives it will be well, and if they kill us, even that will be better than starving to death."

So, as it grew dark, they crept down to the Syrian camp, but when they reached it, they found, to their great surprise, that no one was there. They entered one tent and there they found a table with food upon it. They were so hungry that they ate it greedily. In the tent were also silver and gold and beautiful garments, which the lepers took and carefully hid. Then they entered another tent and that, also, had no one in it. Again the lepers carried away the treasures that they found and hid them. But then they said: "We are not doing right; this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace" (that is, "We are keeping this good news to

ourselves"): "now therefore come, let us go and tell the king."

So they went to the gate and called to the porter. When he answered, they said: "We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no man there, but the horses and asses were tied and the tents stood as they had been left."

The porter quickly sent a messenger to the king with this news but Joram could not believe that the Syrians had really gone. He said, "They are doubtless hiding near, so when we come into their tents, they can spring upon us and take us all prisoners and then enter our city."

One of his servants answered, "Let us find out if this report be true."

So the king sent some of his soldiers to see if the Syrians had really gone. They found the tents empty, as the lepers had said, and as they went towards the river Jordan, the road was strewn with garments and dishes and other things which the Syrians had cast away in their haste as they ran. It seems that the Lord had made the Syrians hear a loud noise which sounded as if a large army, with many chariots and horses, was coming upon them. They thought that the Israelites had sent to Egypt and other nations and asked for help and that the armies of these nations were now advancing.

They were greatly frightened and all fled, so that they should not be killed.

When the messengers of the king of Israel found that the Syrians really had fled across the river, they hastened back to tell the good news to Joram and to the people. The Israelites went quickly to the tents of the Syrians and oh, how good it was to have all they wanted to eat once more! When they had eaten all they wished, they carried the food, the horses and asses, the gold, silver and other treasures back to the city. And there indeed a measure of fine flour or two measures of barley were sold for a shekel, as Elisha had said they would be.

XL

JONAH'S MESSAGE TO NINEVEH

Jonah i; ii; iii

Picture—JONAH PREACHING TO THE NINEVITES.—
*Doré*¹

STORY

SOME time after Elisha had gone to be with the heavenly Father, there was a prophet in Israel whose name was Jonah. At some distance from the country of the Israelites there was a city called Nineveh, whose people were very wicked, and God told Jonah to say to them that, because of their sins, their city should be destroyed. Jonah did not want to take this message to the people of Nineveh, even though God told him to do so. Perhaps he was afraid that they would kill him or he may have thought that he would rather preach to his own people.

Instead, therefore, of going to that city, he took a boat and started in another direction. Do you think that he could run away where God could not find him? Oh, no, he soon found out that God was just as near him on the sea as He was on the land. The sea was calm when the

¹ This is a small size picture in the Perry collection.

ship started but soon a high wind arose and the great waves dashed against the boat as if they would break it to pieces. The sailors were afraid and prayed to their idols, which they thought were gods, for they did not know about the true God, our heavenly Father. They did everything they could to strengthen the ship but they feared it would be dashed to pieces, as the storm grew worse and worse.

At the beginning of the voyage, Jonah had gone down into the hold, or lower part of the ship, where he could rest, and had fallen asleep. As the great storm did not awaken him, the captain went to him and said: "How can you sleep when, at any moment, we may all be drowned! Arise and pray to your God and ask Him to help us, so we need not die."

In those days people often drew lots when they wished to find out anything. The sailors thought that perhaps some one on the ship had done wrong and therefore the terrible storm had been sent, so they drew lots to see who it was and the lot came to Jonah. Then the sailors asked him: "Tell us why this trouble has come to us? What is your occupation?" (that is, "What work do you do?") "From what place do you come? What is your country? Who are your people?" They were so eager to learn about him that they all asked questions at once.

Then Jonah told them that he was a Hebrew,

or Israelite, and that the Lord, who made the sea and the land, was his God. He told them, also, that the Lord had sent him to Nineveh but instead of obeying Him, he had taken their ship for Tarshish. While they were talking together, the waves grew larger and larger and the sailors feared that they would be dashed to pieces. They therefore asked, "What shall we do that the sea may be calm again?"

Jonah replied: "Take me and cast me into the sea: then the waves will cease and the sea will grow calm, for I am sure that God has sent this storm because I disobeyed Him."

But the sailors were kind men and they did not want to throw Jonah into that raging sea, so they rowed hard (for the boat had oars as well as sails) and tried to bring the ship to land. But they could not do this, for the sea was too rough and they feared that they would all be drowned. They prayed to God and asked Him to keep them from death and to forgive them for casting Jonah out of the ship. Then they took him and threw him into the water, as he had asked them to do, and at once the wind died down and the sea grew calm. The sailors were then very sure that the Lord of the Israelites had indeed sent the storm and they prayed to Him and promised to worship Him.

Do you think that Jonah was drowned when he was thrown into the great waves? No, God

wished only to punish him for his disobedience. Just as he was thrown into the water, a very large fish appeared and swallowed him, and for three days and three nights he was in the fish. While he was there, he prayed to God and begged Him to forgive him for his disobedience. Then he thanked God for keeping him from drowning and he asked Him to save him from the fish and to bring him to land once more. And the Lord spoke to the fish and it threw Jonah up on to the dry land.

Then once more God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, and do you think he obeyed? Yes, indeed, he went at once. He was no longer afraid to carry God's message, for he knew that if the Lord could keep him safe in the fish, He could also care for him in this wicked city. Nineveh had beautiful palaces, gardens and parks, crowded shops, and many vineyards, and was so large that it took three days to walk around it. Pastures for the flocks, and fields of grains were within the walls of the city, for when their enemies came against them, all the people who worked in the fields, and the shepherds who cared for the sheep upon the hills, hurried to the city to be protected by its walls, and there must be both room and food for them.

To the people driving in splendid chariots and thronging the market-places, how startling the message of Jonah must have been! He was

dressed, like Elijah, in a rough cloak of camel's hair, with a leather girdle about his waist, and his hair hung low over his shoulders. As soon as he entered within the walls, he cried in a loud voice, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (that is, "In just forty days Nineveh shall be destroyed"). As he walked on through the city, he repeated this one sentence over and over: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Every one who heard him was alarmed. All saw by his clothing that he was a prophet and they wondered if his terrible words would come true. Was this beautiful city where they lived really to be destroyed and would they all be killed? They crowded about him and asked from what country he had come and who were his people. And then he told them that he had not wanted to bring God's message to them, but when he had tried to run away from God, the terrible storm had been sent and he had been thrown into the sea. He told them, also, of the great fish which had swallowed him and in which he had been for so long a time, until at last he was thrown upon the land ready to obey God.

When they heard all this, the people were greatly frightened and they put on sackcloth—a rough, coarse cloth, you remember, which was worn to show great trouble—and they prayed to God to forgive their sins and to save their city.

Messengers carried the dreadful tidings to the king and he, too, took off his rich robes and his jewelled crown and putting on sackcloth, he wept and prayed. Then he sent out a command to all his people that they should neither eat nor drink but should weep and pray, for he hoped that, if they did this, God would hear their prayers and forgive them and save their city.

When God heard the prayers of the king and all the people of Nineveh and saw how truly sorry they were that they had been so wicked, He did forgive them, for He is a loving Father, and He did not destroy their city. I am sure that all the Ninevites thanked and praised Him and that there was great joy and gladness throughout the city.

XLI

THE FAITH OF HEZEKIAH

2 Kings xvii-xix; Psalm xlv: 1

Picture—DESTRUCTION OF THE ARMY OF SEN-
NACHERIB.—*Doré*¹

STORY

AS I have told you in other stories, the kings of Israel were bad men who neither obeyed the Lord themselves, nor helped the people to do so. God sent prophets as His messengers to tell the Israelites how sinful they were and that if they did not stop doing wicked things, they could not stay in the land which He had given them.

Hosea was one of these prophets and when you are older, you will read the words that he spoke to the people. Though he told the Israelites that God would surely punish them unless they were sorry for their sins and did what was right, he also told them how loving and kind the heavenly Father was and how He wanted to help them and to give them joy and gladness in-

¹ The picture of Hezekiah Destroying the Idols, and the details of Hosea and Isaiah, by John Sargent, might be shown with this story.

stead of trouble and sorrow. But the people would not listen to what Hosea said.

Then God sent punishments—locusts (a kind of grasshopper) which destroyed their grain, famine, when they had little to eat, earthquakes, and dreadful diseases, which killed many of them—but still they did not try to do better. They did not worship God, but instead they prayed to heathen idols; they were cruel and unkind to the poor people, and they cared only for their gorgeous palaces of marble and ivory, for rich food and beautiful clothing.

At last God allowed the king of Assyria to march against Israel with his large army. Nineveh, about which we heard in our last story, belonged to the king of Assyria. The Assyrians were much stronger than the Israelites and as God did not help His people, they were defeated. Then the king of Assyria carried most of those who had not been killed in the war back to his country and put his own people in the land of Israel. How sad the Israelites must have felt to be taken far away from their own dear country, which they loved, but they knew that this punishment had come to them because they had disobeyed God.

Meantime, in Judah, most of the kings had been good men who had tried to please God and to help the people to do right. But when the Israelites were carried away to Assyria, Ahaz

was the king of Judah and he was as bad a man as the kings of Israel had been. He prayed to idols, as they had done, closed the beautiful Temple so that no one could go there, and was wicked in many ways. The people, also, did what was wrong. God sent a prophet, named Isaiah, to urge them not to do such wicked things.

Many enemies came against the people of Judah and they were in great trouble. Instead of asking God to help them defeat these enemies, Ahaz went to the king of Assyria for help. This the king of Assyria gave, but in return he demanded a very large sum of money from Ahaz.

When Ahaz died, his son Hezekiah, who was only fifteen years old, became king. Although his father had been so wicked, his mother, Abijah, who was the daughter of one of God's priests, loved the heavenly Father, and she had taught her little boy to try to please Him in all that he did. So when Hezekiah became king, the Bible tells us that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, just as King David had done. All the idols, to which the people had been praying, he ordered destroyed, and he opened the beautiful Temple once more.

He marched against the Philistines, the old enemies of God's people, defeated them and took the cities which they had taken from his father.

He also refused to pay to the king of Assyria the money which his father had paid each year. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, was very strong and powerful. He was a proud man and he thought that no one was so great as he. When the money was not paid him by Hezekiah, he marched into Judah and took many cities.

When Hezekiah heard that he was coming, he filled up the fountains and wells which were outside the city, so the Assyrians would have trouble in getting water. He made the walls of Jerusalem stronger, also, and built towers upon them. And he gathered all the people together and said unto them: "Be strong and brave; do not be afraid of the king of Assyria and of his great army, for, with God to help us and to fight our battles for us, we are stronger than Sennacherib." The Bible tells us that the people rested themselves on the words of Hezekiah (that is, they were no longer troubled).

When Sennacherib was some distance away from Jerusalem, he sent a letter to Hezekiah in which he told how many cities he had taken in different countries. And he said: "Did the gods of these cities save them? No more shall your God save Jerusalem, but I shall surely take it."

When Hezekiah received the letter, he carried it to the Temple and there he spread it out before God and he prayed: "O Lord God of Israel,

Thou art God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth ; Thou hast made heaven and earth. O Lord, bow down Thine ear and hear ; open Thine eyes, O Lord, and see ; and hear the words of Sennacherib which he hath sent to reproach Thee. Of a truth the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire ; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone ; therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord, our God, save Thou us, I beseech Thee, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone art God."

Then Isaiah, the prophet, sent a message to Hezekiah, saying, " Thus saith the Lord God of Israel : ' I have heard thy prayer, and the king of Assyria shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow against it, nor come before it with a shield, but he shall return by the way that he came, for I will defend this city and save it.' "

The Bible tells us that during that night the angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians the highest officers and a great number of the soldiers. So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, went back to his own land and he and all the other nations learned that the God of Israel was not like the idols of wood and stone, but that He could save His people.

Hezekiah and all the people of Jerusalem

thanked and praised God for saving them from their enemies. I think that they may have sung one of the beautiful Psalms, which begins :

“ God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.”

XLII

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

*2 Kings xxi-xxv; 2 Chronicles xxxiii-xxxvi;
Jeremiah xxxvi: 1-24*

Picture—JERUSALEM DESTROYED AND THE JEWS
DEPORTED¹

STORY

AFTER Hezekiah died, his son became king of Judah but he was unlike his father. He was only twelve years old when he came to the throne, and his courtiers may have been bad men who persuaded him to do wrong, for he was one of the worst kings that Jerusalem had ever had. He disobeyed God by worshipping the sun and the stars, and the idols to which the heathen prayed, and he led the people into sin.

God sent prophets to tell the people how wrong it was for them to do these things, and that they should surely be punished unless they did differently, but they would not listen. The poor people were made to pay heavy taxes and

¹The pictures of Huldah and the Book of the Law, and of Josiah and the Book of the Law would illustrate this story. The latter is by Julius von Schnorr; the artists of the former and of Jerusalem Destroyed are unknown.

when they could not do this, they were sold for slaves and had to work very hard. While they became poorer and poorer, the nobles became richer and richer. They built beautiful palaces of ivory and gold, while the poor lived in little mud huts. Neither the king nor the nobles had pity on the poor but instead they made their lives hard and miserable.

When this bad king died, his son, also, did wickedly. But the next king was Josiah and he was a good man who tried to please God. Like Hezekiah, he had a good mother and it was she who had taught him to love God. He was only eight years old when he became king and I think that his mother must have helped him to do the things which would please the heavenly Father.

We have the Bible to tell us what God wishes us to do, but in those days different prophets wrote God's laws for the people. One day, while Josiah was king, a book which had been written by Moses was found. It had been lost for many years but the wicked kings who did not care for God's laws had not tried to find it. The man who found this book read it to Josiah. In it Moses told how the Israelites would be blessed if they served God and tried to please Him. And he also told of the troubles they would have if they did not obey God, such as drought, when no rain would fall; famine, when they would have no food; and dreadful sickness,

until at last they would be taken prisoners and carried to other countries.

When Josiah heard these words, he tore his clothes to show his great grief, for he knew that the people of his country had not obeyed God nor tried to please Him and he was afraid that these dreadful punishments would come to them. He sent the book to a prophetess, or woman prophet, named Huldah, to ask if these punishments would really come to his people and she replied that they would be sent upon the people of Judah because they had been so wicked and had disobeyed God by praying to idols. But because the king himself had tried to please God, these troubles would not come while he lived.

Josiah had done many things to help his people, even before the book was found. But now he tried even harder to help them to obey God, so their sins might be forgiven. He sent all over the kingdom for the idols which the people had been worshipping and had them broken and burned. Then he called the people together to hear this book read aloud. Old men, soldiers, priests, mothers with their little children, and boys and girls all gathered about the good king Josiah as he read to them what God wished them to do. Then they all praised God in the Temple. Josiah was very kind to the poor people, who had been cruelly treated by the wicked kings, and he was called the good king Josiah.

The country was peaceful and happy most of the time during his reign.

But as soon as he died, the people at once forgot all that he had done to help them and again began to worship idols. Four more kings ruled over them but none of them tried to please God. Then the Lord sent many troubles upon the people—drought, famine and sickness. Other nations came to fight against them and carried many of them away as prisoners. And the prophet Jeremiah was sent to preach to the people of Judah and to tell them that if they did not obey God, their city should be destroyed and they would all be carried away as captives.

But neither God's punishments nor the prophet's words made the people do better. They no longer kept the Sabbath as God's holy day. Instead of going to church and resting, people did their marketing, cut down the grain and often worked harder than on any other day, and they did many other things which they knew God had forbidden. Jeremiah sent a long letter to be read to the people, telling them how their sins grieved the heavenly Father and how they would be punished for them. The people were frightened when they heard this letter and said that the king, also, must hear it. But when it was read to him, he cut it in pieces and burned it, saying he was sure that it was not true, and that God would not punish them as

Jeremiah said. Think how different he was from the good king Josiah.

At last, as the king and people were not sorry for their sins and would not try to do better, God sent the great king Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem. His large army surrounded the city, but the walls were so strong that no one could get in. But neither could the people get out, and, after a time, their food was all gone and they suffered terribly. Finally the soldiers entered the city and after taking out all the beautiful things, they burned the Temple, all the palaces and houses, and broke down the walls. Then they carried the people prisoners to Babylon. God had done so much for the people of Judah, but they would not try to please Him, so He could not let them live longer in the beautiful land which He had given them.

XLIII

DANIEL INTERPRETS NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

Daniel i; ii

STORY

WHEN Josiah was king, a little boy was born in Jerusalem, whose name was Daniel. He was a beautiful child and as good as he was beautiful. He was taught by his parents to love God, and all his life he tried to please the heavenly Father. When Nebuchadnezzar took the people of Judah as captives to Babylon, he told Ashpenaz, one of his officers, to take the brightest and handsomest boys and bring them to his palace to be trained there to serve him. Daniel, who was then about fourteen years of age, was taken as one of these boys.

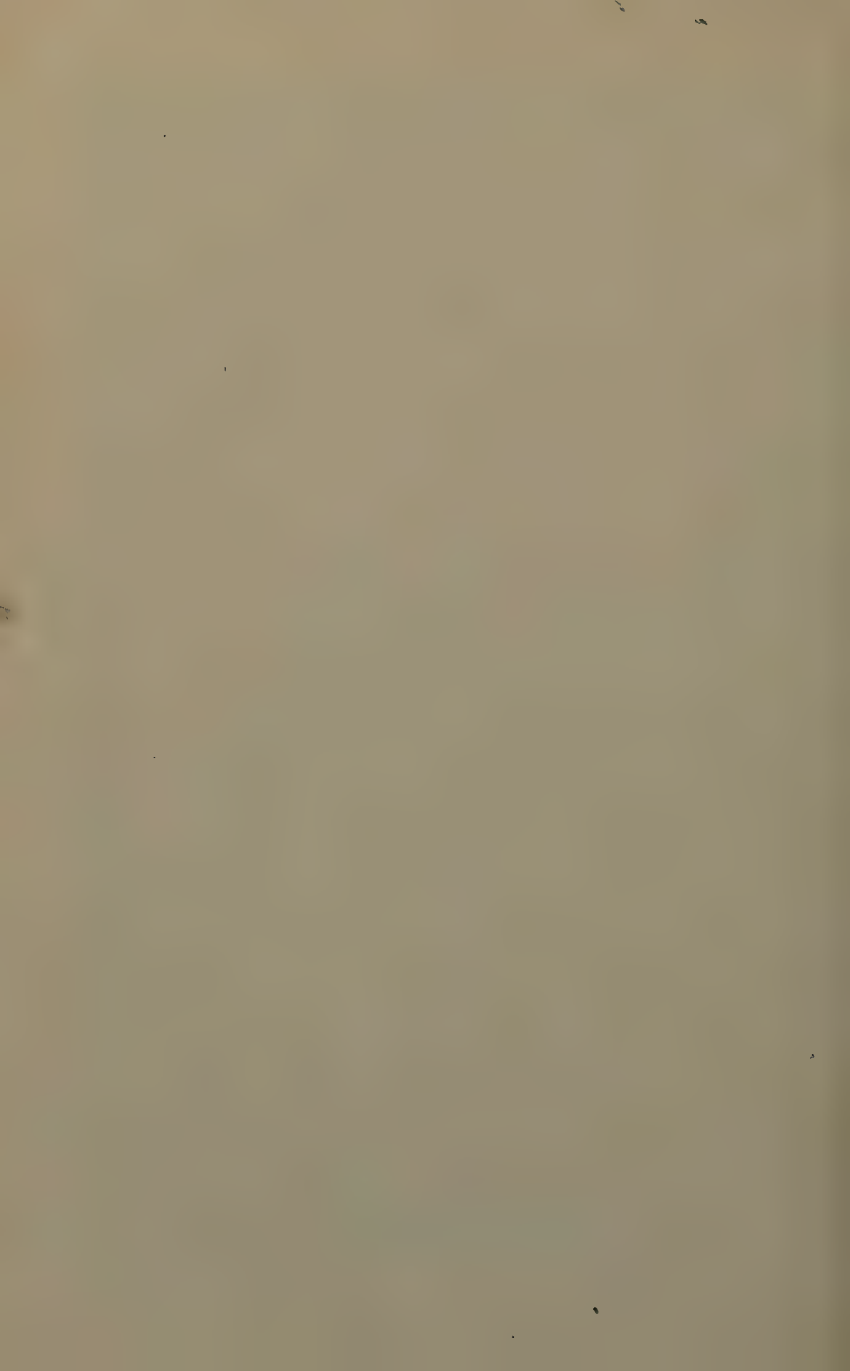
It must have been hard for him to leave his home and to go to this distant land, and yet I know that he must have seen much to interest him on the journey. The party with which he travelled crossed a great river and then, instead of the vineyards, the olive and fig trees which grew in his own country, Daniel saw the palm trees, on which dates grow, fields of wheat,

barley and rice, and gardens filled with bright flowers. And as they neared Babylon, he saw the merchants with their long lines of horses and camels, carrying goods to the great city. And how wonderful that city, with its immense wall, broad streets and great buildings, must have seemed to the boy.

When they reached Babylon, Daniel and the other boys were taken to a large building near the palace where everything was strange and different from what they had had at home. Even their names were changed. Wouldn't it be hard for you to be taken to another country and there perhaps be called Arioch, instead of by your own name? Daniel means "God is my Judge," and his parents had given this name to him because they believed in God. But now he was called Belteshazzar, which suggested the name of one of the idols of the Babylonians. He had three friends among the boys who had come from Jerusalem and their names, also, had beautiful meanings. The name of one was Hananiah, which meant "God is gracious," another was called Mishael, "Who is equal to God," and the third, Azariah, "God is a helper," but now they, too, were given heathen names. Hananiah was called Shadrach, Mishael, Meshach, and Azariah, Abed-nego.

The boys were all kindly treated, however, and food and wine was sent them from the





king's own table. But some of this food had been offered to idols and so Daniel had been taught that it was wrong for him to eat it. He therefore asked Ashpenaz if he might have simple food. He was so bright and attractive and had been so quick to do all that was asked of him, ever since he left Jerusalem, that Ashpenaz had learned to love him. When he asked to be allowed to eat plain food, instead of the rich meat from the king's table, Ashpenaz wished to grant his request but he said: "The king has planned for you to have this meat and drink and if, by not taking it, you did not look as well as the other young men, Nebuchadnezzar would be very angry and he might even kill me."

Daniel's three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, also, did not wish to take the king's rich food. Daniel asked, therefore, that they might try plain food for ten days and then it could be seen how their looks compared with those of the other boys. So he and his friends were allowed to eat fruits and vegetables instead of the king's rich meats and to drink water instead of wine, and at the end of the ten days, the Bible tells us, their faces were fairer and they had gained more flesh than any of the boys who had eaten the food from the king's table. Therefore the king's officers said that they might continue eating the plain food.

Do you think it was an easy thing for Daniel and his friends to take this food? No, I think that they would have enjoyed the rich meats and other dishes from the king's table, for all boys like good things to eat. But they knew that God did not wish them to take this food and they always tried to please the heavenly Father. The other boys who had come from Jerusalem were not so careful to please God and perhaps they laughed at Daniel and his friends and made fun of them because they ate such simple food. But I think these four boys did not mind their teasing. When they were doing right, they did not care if others did laugh at them.

All the boys who had been brought to Babylon had to work hard with their lessons, for they had many difficult things to learn, and they had to talk in the language used by the people among whom they now lived. At the end of three years they were brought before the king to be examined, and who do you think were found to be the very brightest scholars of all? Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

One night, some time after this, Nebuchadnezzar had a very strange dream. You know that often, when we awake in the morning, we cannot remember what we dreamed, and so it was with Nebuchadnezzar. The wise men in his kingdom had said that they could tell what dreams meant. The king thought, therefore, that, if they could

do this, they could also tell him what his dream had been. So he sent for all the wise men to come to the palace and they came and stood before him. And Nebuchadnezzar said unto them, "I have dreamed a dream and I wish very much to know what it means."

The wise men replied, "O king, live forever" (this was the greeting given to kings), "tell thy servants" (or tell us who wish to serve you) "the dream and we will show the interpretation" (or tell you what it means).

But the king replied that he had forgotten what his dream was and they must tell him this, as well as what it meant. If they did so, he would give them rich presents, but if they did not do it, they should all be killed. The wise men answered, "There is not a man upon earth who can do this and no other king or ruler has ever asked such a thing of his wise men."

Then the king became very angry and commanded his soldiers to kill all the wise men. Was he not terribly cruel to order them killed just because they could not tell him his dream? Daniel and his three friends had not come before the king but the soldiers came to kill them, also, because they were thought to be wise. When Daniel asked why they were to be put to death, the captain answered that it was because the wise men could not tell the king's dream. Then Daniel went to King Nebuchadnezzar and asked

that a little time might be given him and he would tell the king his dream. The king granted this request and Daniel returned to his friends. To whom do you think that they went for help? To the heavenly Father. He alone knew what the king's dream had been and when Daniel and his friends prayed Him to help them, He answered their prayer. That night He showed to Daniel the king's dream and He told him also what it meant.

As soon as Daniel awoke, he thanked God for answering his prayer and showing him what the dream was. When you are older, I know that you will like to read his beautiful prayer. Daniel then went to the captain and told him not to kill the wise men, for he would tell the king his dream. When Daniel stood before the king, Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen and the interpretation thereof?" (that is, its meaning.) It was hard for the king to believe that this young man could do something which all his wise men had failed to do.

Daniel answered: "None of your wise men can do what you desire nor am I wise enough to do this, but there is a God in heaven who knows all secrets and it is He who has made known to me your dream. Before you slept, you were thinking of your great kingdom and you were wondering what would happen to it many years

from now. You saw a large image, or statue, of a man. His head was of gold, his breast and arms were of silver, his body was of brass, his legs were of iron and his feet were of iron and clay. And as you were looking at this image, it was struck by a large stone which broke the feet in pieces, and down fell the huge figure. Then the stone became a great mountain that filled all the earth."

Daniel then told Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom was like the beautiful head of gold but, after he died, other kings would reign whose kingdoms would be like the silver, brass and iron. He told him what the rock, also, meant, but of this you will read when you are older. The king was greatly astonished that Daniel could tell him both his dream and its meaning and he said, "Of a truth your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets" (that is, one who knows and can tell secret things).

Then Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel many presents and made him a great ruler. Daniel wanted his friends to share his good fortune, so he spoke to the king about them and they, too, were given high places in the city of Babylon.

XLIV

SAVED FROM THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel iii

STORY

AFTER Nebuchadnezzar had conquered all his enemies, he wanted to give thanks to the god who he thought had helped him. Though he knew that through Daniel's God he had been shown his dream and its meaning, he did not worship Him. He had a great statue of a man made which was covered with gold. A long procession of the chief men of Babylon and of the courtiers and soldiers brought this statue from the place where it was made and set it up in a plain near the city. Then the king sent messengers throughout the vast kingdom, commanding all the governors and high officers of the provinces to come to Babylon.

When all had arrived, the king called both those who had come from a distance and also the people of Babylon together. Such an immense gathering as it was! From east and west the people had come: some were black and some were white and others had bronze skin. They spoke different languages and were dressed in many different colours and in all kinds of costumes. Some came from the mountains and

some from the plains ; others from cities and still others from islands. To all these people a herald (one who calls out a message) cried in a loud voice : " The king commands, O peoples and nations, that when you hear the sound of the cornet, flute and other instruments, you shall bow down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship this image, shall be thrown into a burning fiery furnace."

The image was so tall that every one in the great crowd could see it plainly and the sunbeams made it look almost as bright as the sun. Suddenly the silver horns and other instruments sounded and all the people bowed low and worshipped the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up. All the people, I said, but there were three who did not bow down and these were Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, as they were now called. I think that Daniel must have been sent by Nebuchadnezzar on a mission (or errand) to some other country, for I know that, had he been in Babylon, he, too, would not have worshipped the golden image. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego loved and worshipped God and they knew that it would not be right for them to bow down to this image which Nebuchadnezzar had made, for God had commanded that they should not bow down to any images nor serve them, and

they could not disobey Him, even though the king of Babylon told them to do so.

Then some of the wise men came to the king and said: "O king, live forever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree" (or hast commanded) "that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews" (another name for the Israelites), "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon" (you remember that Daniel had spoken to the king of his three friends and they, too, had been given high positions): "these men, O king," said the wise men, "have not obeyed thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

I think that these men were jealous because such high places had been given to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, and they hoped to get them into trouble. Nebuchadnezzar was very angry when he heard that these Jews, to whom he had been kind, had not obeyed him, but he wished to be sure that this was true, so he commanded that they should be brought to him. When they stood before him, the king said unto them: "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you serve not my gods, nor

worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp and all kinds of music, to bow down and worship the image that I have made, well: but if you do not worship it, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Nebuchadnezzar did not think that the God whom these men worshipped could save them, but do you think that He could? Yes, indeed, the heavenly Father had much more power than the cruel king. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter" (that is, "We cannot do as you command"). "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and if He wishes to do so, He will deliver us. But even if He does not, we cannot serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."

Was it not very brave of these three young men to dare to thus answer the king? Though they knew how powerful he was, they would rather die than disobey God. Nebuchadnezzar was terribly angry at their words and he commanded that the furnace be made seven times hotter than usual, and that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego be bound and cast into it.

After his commands had been obeyed, Nebuchadnezzar looked into the great open door of the furnace. But suddenly he started in fear and astonishment, for he had seen a wonderful sight. Turning to his courtiers, he asked, "Did we not cast *three* men bound into the midst of the fire?"

They answered and said unto the king, "True, O king."

He answered and said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt: and the fourth looks like a god."

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the burning fiery furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither."

Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came forth out of the midst of the fire. And all the governors and great men of the kingdom, who were gathered together, saw that the fire, which had destroyed the ropes which had bound them, had not burned their bodies nor singed their hair nor changed the colour of their clothes. There was not even the smell of fire upon them. God had kept them safe from the flames and had sent an angel to stay with them in the furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants who trusted in Him and who were willing to disobey the king and even to die rather than

serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree" (or I command) "that any one in all my kingdom who shall speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be put to death, because there is no other god who is able to deliver his people in this way."

Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego still more important positions in the city of Babylon, and though the Bible tells us no more of these three young men, I am sure that they were always brave, strong and true, as they were at this time.

XLV

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Daniel v

Picture—DANIEL INTERPRETING THE WRITING ON
THE WALL.—*Doré*¹

STORY

AFTER Nebuchadnezzar's death, several kings reigned over Babylon and then one named Nabonidus was made king. He married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and, as he grew older, he allowed his son Belshazzar to reign with him.

At this time there was a great king, named Cyrus, who ruled over Persia. He had taken one country after another and finally he marched against Babylon with a vast army. Nabonidus went out to meet him and a great battle was fought, in which Nabonidus and his soldiers were defeated. They fled to another city, leaving Belshazzar to defend Babylon. You remember what very strong walls Nebuchadnezzar had built about this city. Belshazzar ordered all the gates closed and, as there was food enough to

¹This is a small size picture in the Perry collection. The Vision of Belshazzar, by Benjamin West, and Belshazzar's Feast, by Martin, both in the Wilde collection, might also be shown.

last for many years, he was not at all afraid of Cyrus and his army. He and his people lived just as usual, making merry at feasts, with no thought of danger. Indeed they laughed when they saw the soldiers about their walls, for they thought that the Persians could never get in and, after a while, must march back to their own country.

One night Belshazzar gave a great feast to a thousand of his courtiers. The immense banquet-hall of the palace was hung with many pictures, and the beautiful jewels, which adorned the rich robes of the guests, flashed in the light of myriads of candles. There was music, and dancing by slave girls to entertain the guests, and the rich food was served in dishes of gold and silver. The king sat with his wives at a golden table, raised above the others, so that all might see him.

A great deal of wine was served at this banquet and the king drank and drank. When people take much wine, they often do dreadful things, which they would not do otherwise, and it was so with Belshazzar. As he was drinking, he remembered the beautiful vessels, or cups, of gold, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from God's Temple in Jerusalem, and he ordered that these should be brought, so that he and his guests might drink out of them. Was it not very wicked to thus use cups which had been taken from God's House! Belshazzar must have known

how great God was, and how He had saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego from the fiery furnace, yet now he sent for these holy vessels. When they were brought, Belshazzar had them filled with wine, and then he and his wives and his nobles drank from them and praised their gods, the idols of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone, as if they were greater than the Lord God.

As they were drinking, suddenly the fingers of a man's hand appeared, writing upon the white wall which was brightly lighted by the candles. Belshazzar was terribly frightened, his face grew white and his knees knocked together. His guests started from their tables in great fright and many fled from the hall. The king called loudly to bring in the wise men that they might tell what the words meant which this hand had written. When they came before him, he promised that whoever read the words and told their meaning should be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold about his neck and be the highest ruler in the land next to himself. But no one could read the terrible words. The king grew more and more alarmed and his courtiers did not know what to do.

His mother, who was Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, you remember, had not been at the banquet but when she heard the cries of terror which came from the hall and was told what had

happened, she hastened to the king. She told him not to be so frightened, for there was a man in Babylon who was great, good and wise. He had told Nebuchadnezzar what his dreams meant and she felt sure that he could read this writing. Who do you think this man was? Daniel. After Nebuchadnezzar had died, the other kings had not honoured him so much and he had lived quietly in the city, worshipping God and trying to please Him, as he had always done. When Belshazzar heard of Daniel, he commanded that he should be brought to the banquet-hall. Daniel was now an old man, eighty years of age, with white hair and such a strong, good face. When he stood before the king, Belshazzar asked, "Art thou that Daniel who was brought as a captive from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar?"

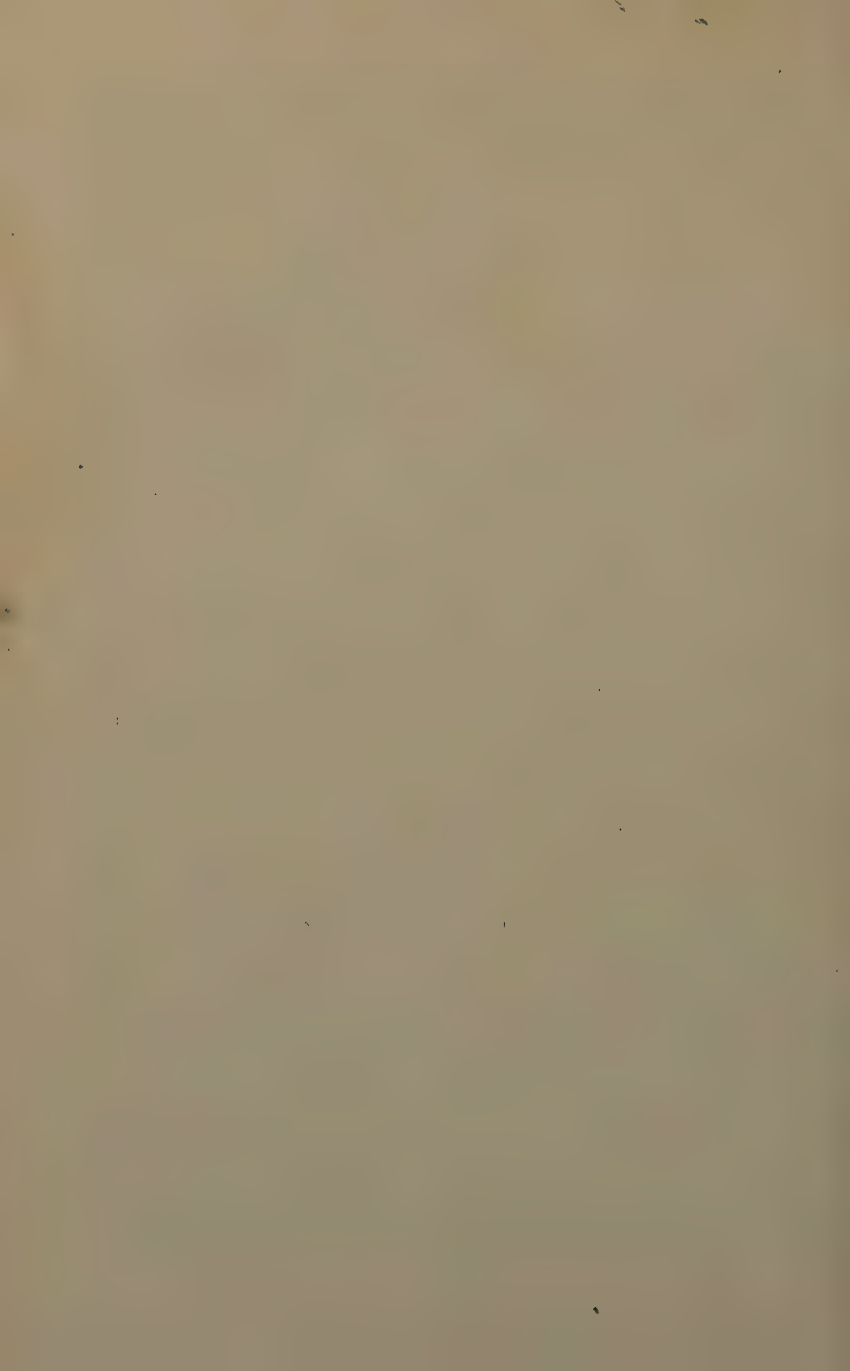
When Daniel replied that he was, the king said: "I have heard that thou hast great wisdom and that thou canst tell what dreams mean. My wise men have tried to read these words, which are written on the wall, but they cannot do so. Now if thou canst read them and tell me what they mean, thou shalt be clothed in purple and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and I will make thee the highest ruler in the land, next to myself."

Daniel replied: "I do not care for thy gifts but I will read the writing and tell its meaning. Thou, O Belshazzar, hast lifted up thyself against

the Lord of heaven ; and they have brought the vessels of His House before thee, and thou and thy lords, and thy wives have drunk wine from them ; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know ; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. Therefore wast this hand sent from Him, and these are the words which were written : MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. MENE means that God will take thy kingdom from thee. TEKEL, that thou hast been judged and it is found that thou hast done evil rather than good. UPHARSIN, that thy kingdom will be given to the Medes and Persians."

When Daniel had told the meaning of the writing, Belshazzar ordered that a robe of purple should be put upon him and a chain of gold about his neck, and that he should be made the highest ruler in the kingdom next to himself. Daniel did not care for all these honours, and instead of giving them to him, it would have been better if the king had been sorry for his great sins and had begged God to forgive him. That very night some of Belshazzar's soldiers opened the gates of Babylon to Cyrus. The Persians entered and took the city and killed Belshazzar and many of his people. And so all those terrible words, which the hand had written on the wall, came true.





XLVI

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

Daniel vi

Pictures—DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS and
DANIEL'S ANSWER TO THE KING.—
Briton Riviere

STORY

AFTER Cyrus had taken the great city of Babylon, he chose a man named Darius to be its king. This man divided the kingdom into one hundred and twenty provinces and placed a governor, or ruler, over each province. Then he chose three presidents, to whom these governors should report, that is, they should tell them what was going on in their provinces and should give to them the taxes they had received for the kingdom. One of these presidents was Daniel. King Darius had been told how he alone had been able to explain the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and to give the meaning of the letters written on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. Darius, therefore, wished to have this man, who was so wise and good, serve him, also.

As time passed, Darius found that Daniel was not only wiser than all his other officers but also

that he was more honest and just than the others, so he planned to make him the highest ruler in the land, next to himself. But the other presidents and officers became jealous because the king wished to make Daniel higher than themselves and they were anxious to harm him. They first watched to see if they could not find him doing something wrong—keeping money that belonged to the king, or sinning in some other way—so that they might tell Darius, but they found that he did only what was right.

They saw that he loved and worshipped God and prayed to Him every day, so they made a plan to get him into trouble. They went to the king and said: “King Darius, live forever” (that was the way, you remember, that people spoke to kings in those days). “All the presidents and other officers of the kingdom wish you to make a law that whoever in all your country shall pray to any god or man but yourself for thirty days shall be cast into the den of lions.”

Was it not wicked to pray to a king as if he were God? But Darius was very vain (that is, he liked to feel that he was great and powerful), so he was pleased when these officers suggested that all the people should pray only to him as if he were God. He never thought that, instead of wishing to honour him, these men really wanted to get Daniel, his favourite officer, into trouble. He, therefore, made this law and among the

Medes, who were Darius' people, and the Persians, of whom Cyrus was king, it was believed that when a king had made a law, even he could not change it.

The officers had told the king that all the presidents had wished him to make this law but this was not true, for Daniel would not worship Darius as if he were God nor would he wish others to do so. I think that perhaps he was away from Babylon on some business of the king's when the officers made this request. When he returned to the city and heard of the new law, do you think that he stopped praying to God? Three times each day, at morning, noon and night, he always went to a room at the top of his house and kneeling by the window which looked towards Jerusalem (the home where he had lived as a boy and where God's Temple had been), he prayed to the dear heavenly Father, thanking Him for all that He had done for him. And now, though he knew that, if he prayed, he would be put into the den of lions, he went to his room just as usual three times a day, and prayed to God. He felt that it was right for him to pray, and even the king's law could not keep him from doing right, for he would rather be killed by the lions than to disobey God.

The other presidents and officers came to Daniel's house and found him praying. They then hastened to the king and said, "Did you not

make a law, O king, that if any one prayed to any god or man, except to yourself, for thirty days, he should be cast into the den of lions? "

Darius replied, " I did make this law and it cannot be changed."

Then the officers said, " Daniel, who was brought as a captive from Jerusalem, does not keep this law, for he prays to his God three times a day."

When the king heard these words, he was greatly troubled. He saw now that these wicked men had asked him to make this law not to honour him but in order to get rid of Daniel who was not only his faithful officer but whom he loved as a friend. All day long he tried to think of a way by which he could save Daniel but he could not do so, as he dared not change the law. When evening came, the officers went once more to the king and said, " You know, O king, that no law made by the king may be changed."

So the king commanded that Daniel should be put into the lions' den. How glad those wicked men were that their plan had succeeded and that Daniel, whom they hated, was to be killed. And how sad the king was because he had been so vain and foolish as to make such a law. He said to Daniel, " I hope that your God, whom you serve so faithfully, will save you from the lions."

Do you think that Daniel was afraid? No, he knew that if God thought best, He could keep

him safe in the lions' den, just as He had kept Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego safe in the fiery furnace, and if God did not save him, he was willing to die. He was now an old man, you remember, over eighty years of age, and as the people saw him taken to the lions' den, they wondered that he could be so calm and show no fear.

The den was a cave not far from the palace and about it were walls. In this cave the great tawny lions were kept, as the king liked to watch them, but they were so fierce that no one dared go near them. The door of the cave was made of a great stone and when Daniel had been put into the den, this stone was rolled before the entrance and both the king and the officers sealed it, so no one could enter. Then the king went back sadly to his palace. He ate no food and all that night he could not sleep. His courtiers and servants wanted him to have musicians play for him or slaves dance before him, so he should not be so sad, but both of these he refused. He thought only of Daniel, his friend, who had served him so faithfully, but who had now been sent to the lions' den, though he had done nothing wrong.

As soon as it grew light the next morning, the king left his palace and hastened to the den of lions. And when he came near, he cried out in a sad voice: "O Daniel, servant of the liv-

ing God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions? "

Oh, how eagerly the king listened and how he rejoiced to hear, from the lions' den, Daniel's voice answering him and saying: "O king, live forever. My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths and they have not hurt me; forasmuch as innocency was found in me" (that is, "I have always tried to do what God wished me to do"), "and also to you, O king, have I done no wrong."

All that night, when the king was so sad and distressed that he could neither eat nor sleep, Daniel had had the company of one of God's beautiful angels. And the lions, instead of tearing him to pieces, had given Daniel no cause to fear them. I cannot tell you how happy the king was! The Bible tells us that he was exceeding glad and he commanded that Daniel should be taken up out of the den. How surprised every one must have been to see this man, whom they supposed dead, come from the lions' den with not even a scratch on his body. They knew then that, because Daniel had trusted in God, the Lord had kept him safe in this terrible danger.

Then the king wrote a letter which messengers carried to all parts of his great kingdom. In this letter he said: "Worship the God of Daniel, for He is a great God and does many wonderful

things. He is able to deliver and save those who trust in Him, as He has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

Daniel was now given the highest place in the kingdom, next to Darius himself, and he served the king faithfully and did all his work honestly and well just as he had before. The Bible tells us that he prospered not only while Darius lived, but also after he died, when Cyrus became the king of Babylon. But though he had so many duties, he never failed to take time to go to his room three times a day to pray to God. I am sure that he thanked the dear heavenly Father for keeping him safe in the lions' den, and I know he asked God to bless his people, the Jews, and to bring them back to their own land again.

Some time after this God sent some wonderful dreams to Daniel, from which he learned what would happen in later times to the Jews, and God even showed him that after many years Jesus would come to bless the world. I am sure that it was because Daniel tried so hard to please the heavenly Father and never forgot to pray to Him that God made him happy by telling him these things.

XLVII

ESTHER MADE QUEEN

Esther i: 1-7; ii: 2-18

Picture—ESTHER.—*Biermann*¹

STORY

AFTER Jerusalem was destroyed, you remember that the people were carried away as captives to Babylon. Here some stayed, among them Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, while others were scattered throughout the whole country. Many of them settled in a city called Susa and in one of these Jewish homes a little boy was born, whom his parents named Mordecai. When he was grown, an uncle and aunt of his died and their little girl, whose name was Esther, was left alone. Mordecai took this child to his home and brought her up as his own daughter. She was very beautiful and what is better, she was loving and obedient to Mordecai and devoted to her people, the Jews.

Ahasuerus, a Persian, was now king of the country and his kingdom was the largest in the world, having one hundred and twenty-seven

¹ This is a small size picture in the Perry collection.

provinces, or small countries. His immense palace had high, beautifully carved pillars and a great number of rooms. Flights of marble steps led up to the different entrances which were guarded by large winged figures. There were wonderful gardens, filled with lovely flowers, rare shrubs and trees. At one time Ahasuerus, wishing every one to know how rich his kingdom was, gave feasts, or banquets, to the great men throughout his kingdom. For six months they came, first from one province and then from another. Thousands sat down together at the tables and large quantities of rich food were eaten each day.

When the rulers of the cities, the generals of the armies and other great men from a distance had been entertained at these banquets, another feast of seven days was given to the people who lived in Susa. This was even more magnificent than the others had been. It was held at the palace, in the court of the garden. Hangings of white, blue and other colours, fastened by cords of white and purple to silver poles and marble pillars, turned the vast space arranged for the banquet into a grand open air hall. The ground was paved with mother-of-pearl and black and white marble. Couches of gold and silver were provided for the guests and the golden drinking cups were each of a different design.

After these magnificent banquets, Ahasuerus

went with his armies to Greece and there he was defeated by that brave little country. When you are older, you will read of the wonderful battles the Greeks fought both on land and sea, and what splendid courage they had. Ahasuerus, furious with rage, did many foolish things. One was to have the sea beaten by his servants because it had destroyed his bridges.

When the king came back to his palace in Susa, his courtiers wished him to forget his troubles, so they proposed that the beautiful young girls throughout his kingdom should be brought to Susa, so that, from them, he might choose a wife. Ahasuerus was pleased with this suggestion and gave orders that these maidens should be brought to him. In seeking for them, the king's officers discovered Esther and as she was very beautiful, they brought her with the others to the palace.

Hegai was the chamberlain, or officer, of the king who cared for the maidens and gave them what they wished. When Esther was brought to him, he was greatly pleased with her, not only because of her beauty but also because she was sweet and gentle. He showed her great kindness, doing even more for her than he did for the others. He gave her the best room and seven maidens to wait upon her. No one knew that Esther was a Jewess, for Mordecai had told her not to tell who her people were, and she

obeyed him just as she had done when a little girl in his home. Every day Mordecai walked near the part of the palace where the maidens were staying, that he might inquire about Esther, for she was very dear to him.

When it came time for Esther to go to the king, Hegai told her that she could have anything she wished but she replied that she would wear just what he chose for her. The Bible tells us that she obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her, that means that every one who saw her was pleased with her. When she was brought to Ahasuerus, he thought her more beautiful than all the other maidens, so he placed the crown upon her head and she became the queen of his immense kingdom.

He then gave another banquet, which he called Esther's feast, and he sent gifts to his people and told them that for a time they need pay no taxes. He was so happy to have Esther for his wife that he wished his people, also, to be happy.

XLVIII

HAMAN'S REVENGE

Esther iii ; iv ; v

Picture—ESTHER BEFORE AHASUERUS.—*Veronese*

STORY

SOME time after Esther had been made queen, a man named Haman became the favourite of King Ahasuerus, that is, the king made him the highest in the kingdom, next to himself. All the king's courtiers and servants bowed low before Haman, for the king had commanded that they should thus show him honour.

Mordecai now guarded one of the gates to the king's palace, that is, he watched to see that no one entered who might harm the king. He would not bow down to Haman, for he did not think that it would be right for him to do so. The king's servants asked him, "Why dost thou disobey the king's commandment?" But Mordecai made no reply.

Then the servants went to Haman and told him that Mordecai, the Jew, would not bow down to him. Haman was very angry and he wished to punish Mordecai. But instead of planning to punish, or put to death, just this one

man who had failed to do him honour, he determined to kill all Mordecai's people, the Jews. Was he not terribly cruel to plan to destroy a whole nation just because one man had offended him?

He wished to choose a good day to carry out his awful plan, so he drew lots, and thus chose the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, almost a year ahead. Then he went to the king and told him that a certain people in his kingdom had different laws from the Medes and Persians (who were Ahasuerus' people), so they did not obey the king's laws. This was untrue, for the Jews were a good people and did obey the king's laws. Haman asked to be allowed to kill all these people and he promised to pay a very large sum of money, if the king would give his permission. The king was willing to do anything to please Haman, so, without troubling himself to find out whether what he had said were true or not, or even who the people were, he took off his ring and giving it to Haman, he told him that he might do what he chose to the Jews.

Then to all the governors of the provinces throughout the kingdom, Haman wrote letters, which he sealed with the king's ring. In these letters he commanded that all the Jews, even the women and children, should be put to death on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. Swift

messengers carried these dreadful commands to all parts of the kingdom, and they brought great distress to the Jews, who wept, went without their food, and put on sackcloth, rough, coarse cloth, you remember, which showed that they were in trouble.

When Mordecai heard of this awful command, which Haman had sent out, he felt dreadfully, for he knew that all this trouble had come to the Jews because he had not bowed down to Haman. He showed his grief by tearing his clothes and by putting on sackcloth and he then cried aloud in his agony. Esther's maidens told her of Mordecai's mourning and she was greatly distressed. She at once sent Hatach, one of the king's officers, to learn what had caused Mordecai's grief, for she had not heard what Haman had done.

When Hatach brought Esther's message, Mordecai told him of all that had happened and of the large sum of money which Haman had promised to pay to the king when the Jews were killed. Mordecai also gave Hatach a copy of the command to destroy the Jews which had been sent to the governors, that he might show it to Esther. Then he asked him to tell her to go to the king and beg him to save her people. And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

But Esther sent this answer to Mordecai by

Hatach: "If any one, either man or woman, goes to the king, who is not called by him, there is a law that he shall be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden sceptre, and for a whole month I have not been called to come to the king."

But Mordecai sent word to Esther that she, too, was in danger of being killed because she was a Jewess, and if she did not help her people, God would send some one else to aid them, but she and all her family would be put to death. And he also said, "Perhaps God made thee queen just at this time, so that thou mightest help thy people in their great trouble."

Then Esther sent this answer to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews who are in the city and pray for me and fast" (or go without food) "for three days. I, too, and my maidens will fast and so will I go in to the king, which is not according to the law" (or which is forbidden), "and if I perish, I perish" (or "If I die, then I must die").

So Mordecai gathered the Jews together and they all fasted and prayed for Queen Esther. On the third day Esther put on her most beautiful robe and her exquisite jewels and went into the court that led to the throne room of the king. Ahasuerus sat upon his throne in magnificent robes all adorned with jewels and upon his head was a golden crown. In his hand he held a

golden sceptre and when he saw his lovely queen standing in the court, he held it out to her. Oh, how thankful Esther was to know that the king would receive her and that she need not be put to death. She drew near and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, "What dost thou wish, Queen Esther? I will give thee anything that thou desirest."

And Esther replied, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come to-day to a banquet which I have prepared for them."

The king was willing to accept Esther's invitation and he and Haman came to her banquet. After they had eaten, the king asked again, "What dost thou wish, Queen Esther? Thou shalt have anything that thou desirest."

Esther replied, "If it please thee, O king, wilt thou come with Haman again to-morrow to the banquet which I shall prepare and then will I tell thee my desire."

Haman was greatly pleased to be invited twice by Queen Esther to her banquets. But as he passed out of the gate of the palace, he saw Mordecai, who neither rose nor bowed to him, and he was very angry. He went home and calling his wife and friends about him, he told them how great and rich he had become. He said that the king had made him higher than any one else in the kingdom, except himself, and that the queen had invited him to her banquet with

the king. "To-morrow," he added, "the king and I are asked to banquet with her again, but all this gives me no pleasure because Mordecai, the Jew, refuses to bow down to me."

Then his wife and friends advised him to go to the king and ask that Mordecai be put to death, and Haman determined to do this the very next day.

XLIX

MORDECAI'S REWARD

Esther ii : 21-23 ; vi

Picture—THE TRIUMPH OF MORDECAI

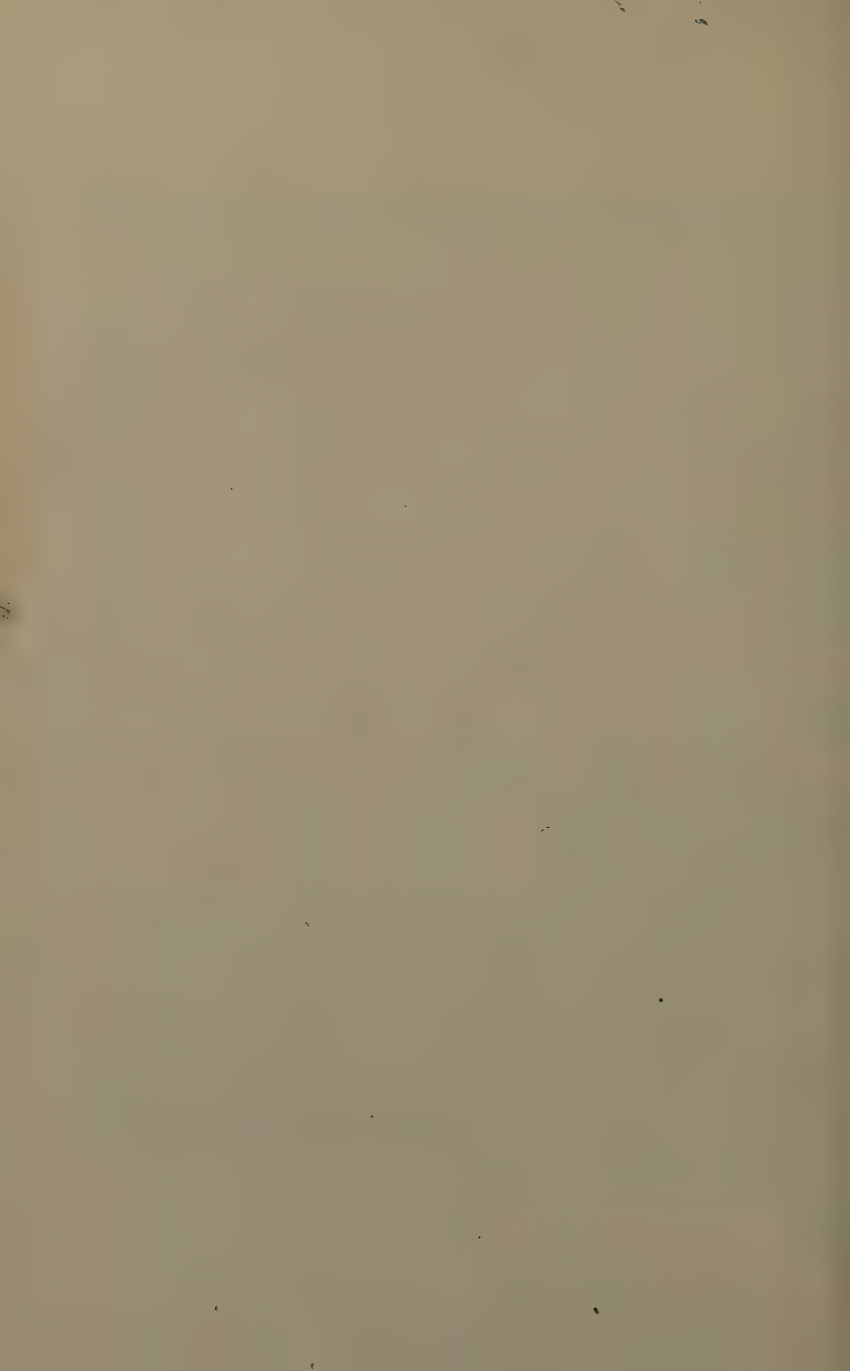
STORY

SOME time before Haman became the favourite of the king, Mordecai (who guarded one of the gates to the king's palace, you remember) overheard two of the chamberlains of Ahasuerus talking together. These men were angry at something that the king had done and they were planning to kill him. Mordecai at once reported this to Esther and she told the king of it. When Ahasuerus found that Mordecai's words were true, he commanded that these wicked men should be put to death.

All this happened some years before Esther's banquet. On that night the king could not sleep, so he told his servants to bring a book of history and read it aloud to him. This book told of what had happened since he had become king. The servant began to read that part of the book which told how Mordecai had saved the king's life by telling of the plot to kill him which the wicked chamberlains had made.



THE TRIUMPH OF MORDECAI



When the king heard this, he asked, "What has been done for Mordecai to reward him for thus saving my life?"

And the servants answered, "Nothing has been done for him."

This troubled the king, for he was sorry to have seemed so ungrateful to Mordecai for this great service. It was now early in the morning and the king heard some one in the court which was outside his room and he asked, "Who is in the court?"

Now it happened that Haman had just come to ask the king to put Mordecai to death. The servants answered the king, "Behold, Haman standeth in the court."

And the king said, "Let him come in."

So Haman came in. Before he could speak, the king asked, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?"

Haman knew that he was the king's favourite, so he said to himself, "The king must be thinking of me, for I am sure he would rather honour me than any one else." So he answered the king, "For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let a royal robe be brought such as the king wears and the horse that the king rideth upon and on the head of which a crown royal is set." (When the king rode through the city, not only did he wear a crown upon his head, but a crown was set upon the head of his horse, also.)

"Let this robe," said Haman, "and this horse be given to one of the king's most noble princes, that the man whom the king delighteth to honour may be clothed in the robe and brought on horseback through the city, and let the noble prince cry aloud before him, 'Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.'"

Haman thought how much he should enjoy wearing the king's robe and riding his horse and having every one know that the king delighted to honour him. But think how astonished and shocked he was to have the king reply: "Make haste and take the robe and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai, the Jew that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken" (that is, "Do for him exactly as you have said").

Haman had to obey the king and so he put the beautiful robe adorned with many jewels on Mordecai, whom he wished to kill. He then led him on horseback through the city and cried in a loud voice, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

After all this honour had been shown him, Mordecai quietly went back to his place at the king's gate. He must have been pleased to have the king thus reward him but it did not make him proud and vain, as honour had made Haman.

Haman was covered with shame because he had had to lead Mordecai about the city and he

did not wish any one to see him, so putting something over his head, he hastened home. There he told his wife and friends of all that had happened to him and they were greatly troubled. They said that they feared, if Mordecai were a Jew, Haman would be punished because he had planned to put all the Jews to death. While they were talking with him, the king's chamberlains came to take Haman to Queen Esther's second banquet.

L

THE KING GRANTS ESTHER'S REQUEST

Esther vii; viii

Picture—ESTHER CONFOUNDING HAMAN.—*Doré*¹

STORY

THE king and Haman came again to Esther's banquet and this time even more had been done by her to make it a beautiful one. There was a garden adjoining the room where it was given, in which were lovely flowers, a plashing fountain and beautiful trees. Here lamps of many colours had been hung which in the evening looked like bright blossoms. On a table of marble a rich and dainty banquet had been prepared, and three couches with handsome coverings had been made ready, for in those days people reclined as they ate. Queen Esther had put on her loveliest gown and her most splendid jewels to receive her guests. Music was played in an inner room and many servants in rich costumes served the banquet.

After they had been for some time at the table, the king, who was much pleased with all that had been done for him, turned to Esther and asked:

¹The picture called Order of Ahasuerus in Favour of the Jews, by Melville, might be shown, also, to illustrate this story.

The King Grants Esther's Request 2.3

"What is thy petition, Queen Esther?" (or, "What do you wish?") "and it shall be granted thee. And what is thy request? and it shall be performed even to the half of the kingdom" (that is, "Even if you should ask for half of my kingdom, I will give it to you").

Then Esther, the queen, answered and said: "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king" (that is, "If I have pleased you"), "and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request" (that is, "Save my life and the lives of my people"). Then she told him that she and her people had been sold and were all to be killed. (You remember that Haman had promised to pay the king a large sum of money when the Jews were killed, so they had really been sold to him.)

King Ahasuerus did not know that Esther was a Jewess and he was terribly angry when he heard that some one was planning to kill her. He said unto her, "Who is he and where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so?" (that is, "Who and where is the man that dares to think even of such a thing as killing you and your people?")

Esther turned and pointing to her other guest said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman."

Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. The king was too angry to speak and

he arose and went into the garden. And Haman turned to Queen Esther and begged her to save him from the king's anger. As the king returned from the garden, he saw Haman on his knees before the queen. It angered Ahasuerus still more to see that Haman dared to speak to the queen, after trying to take her life, and he commanded his servants to lead him away and put him to death.

The king then gave Haman's house and all that he had to Queen Esther. She told him that Mordecai was her cousin and that he had been kind to her ever since she was a little girl, and the king was glad to know that the man who had saved his own life was near and dear to the queen whom he loved. He sent for Mordecai and gave him his ring and told him that he should be the highest one in the land, next to himself, as Haman had been. And Esther gave Haman's house to Mordecai. How glad she must have been that she could do this for her cousin, who had been so loving and kind to her.

The next day Queen Esther went again to the king and once more he held out to her his golden sceptre. Then Esther, weeping, begged that the king would save her people from being killed, as the wicked Haman had planned that they should be. And Ahasuerus told Esther and Mordecai to send messengers to all parts of the kingdom to save the Jews from death. These messengers rode

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on horses, mules and camels, and they made haste, so they might arrive in time to save the Jews who lived farthest away from the palace. Therefore, all over the kingdom, there was great joy and thanksgiving among Esther's people.

Mordecai was clothed in a beautiful robe of white and blue and he had a crown of gold upon his head. He and Queen Esther rejoiced with all their people and thanked God for His goodness to them. Even to the present time the Jews keep as a holiday the anniversary of this day when Queen Esther saved them from their enemies.

LI

THE RETURN OF THE JEWS

Ezra i; ii: 64-69; iii; vi: 14-16; Psalm cxxvi: 1-3

Picture—RETURN OF THE JEWS FROM CAPTIVITY STORY

DO you remember that when the Jews were still in Jerusalem, before Nebuchadnezzar had taken them to Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah had preached to them? He had told them that if they did such wicked things and did not obey God, they would be carried away as captives to Babylon and would be there seventy years. When these words came true and they were taken to Babylon, I know that they must have looked forward to the time when they could return to their homes. Some of them had to work hard, making bricks and building the great palaces and other buildings of Babylon, and often they were unkindly treated. Others had to be soldiers and fight in the king's battles. But they did not have so hard a time as the Israelites had had in Egypt, and a prophet comforted them by saying that God would bring them once more to Jerusalem, if they were sorry for their sins and tried to please Him. Daniel, also, helped them by his brave, strong, true life.

When the seventy years had almost passed, Cyrus, king of the Persians, took the great city of Babylon on the night of Belshazzar's feast, as we have heard. He first made Darius king of that country but, after Darius died, he, himself, became king. Daniel, who had been a high officer under Darius, you remember, still kept his high position and as he had lived so long in the country and had served different kings, I am sure that he helped Cyrus a great deal.

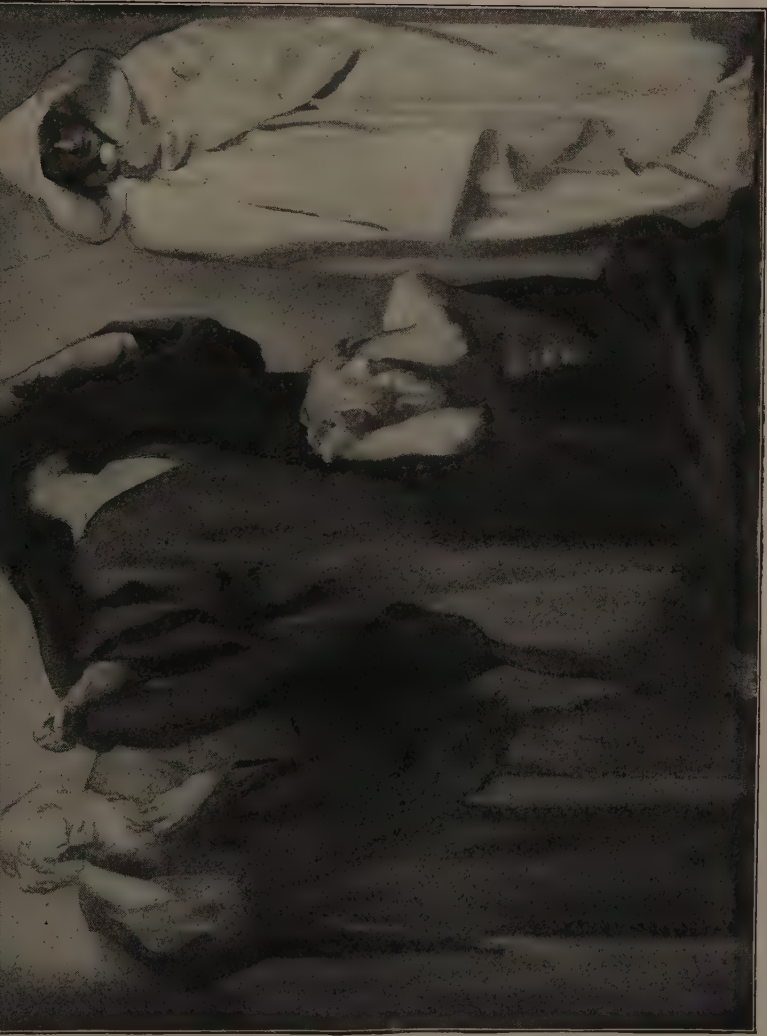
After a while he became the king's friend as well as his officer, and one day he showed Cyrus what the great prophets of Israel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, had said of him and of the length of time that the Jews must be captives in Babylon. Almost a hundred years before Cyrus was born, Isaiah had said that God would choose Cyrus to do His will, that he should conquer many nations and rule over them, and that the gates of Babylon should open to him. And when he had overcome nations and obtained great treasures, he would know that the Lord, who spoke of him by name, had helped him, even though he had not known the heavenly Father.

The Lord had called Cyrus His shepherd because he should care for His people, the Jews. He should keep them no longer as captives in Babylon but should let them return to their own land and he should help them build again the Temple of God in Jerusalem. And Jeremiah

had said that the Israelites should serve the kings of Babylon seventy years and that then both the king and the people of Babylon should be punished because they had been so wicked, and the Israelites should return to their own land.

When Daniel showed these prophecies, or words, of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Cyrus, he was greatly astonished to find that God had spoken of him by name so many, many years before. He had overcome many nations and now he saw that he had done this because God had helped him, so he was quite willing to show his gratitude to the Lord for His goodness to him by helping the Israelites. He therefore sent messengers throughout all his land, saying: "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, 'The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He hath commanded me to build Him a house in Jerusalem. Let His people therefore go to Jerusalem and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. And if any wish to remain in Babylon, let them help by sending silver and gold and other things to aid in building this house.'"

And wherever the messengers went, there was great joy among the Jews. Many of them had been made slaves and you can think how happy they were to learn that they were now free. A great many of the Jews were very glad to go back to their own country and thousands and thousands of them gathered together that they might

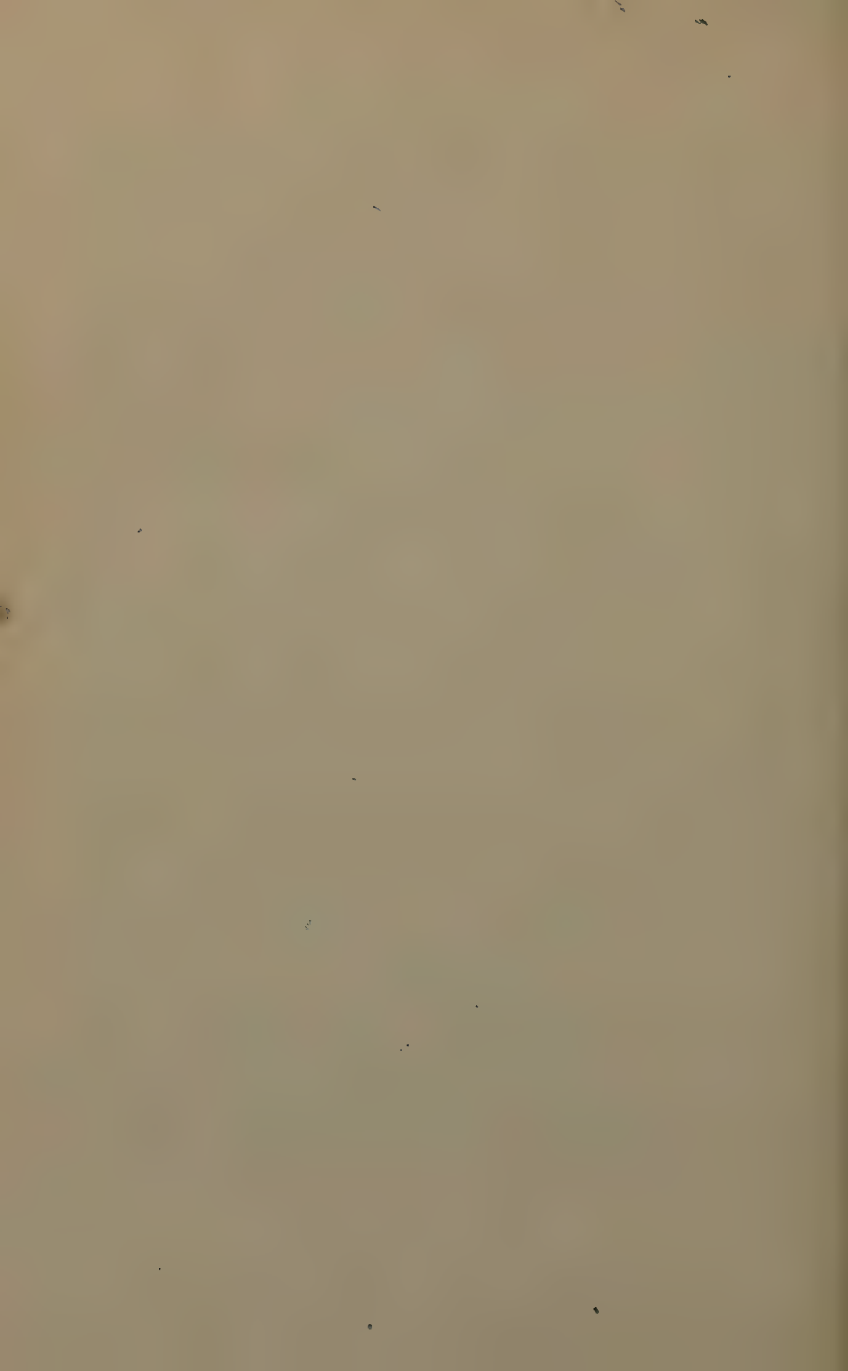


ZEPHANIAH

JOEL

OBADIAH

HOSEA



be ready to start. Those who decided to stay in Babylon gave silver and gold and many other gifts to help in building God's House, and King Cyrus gave all the beautiful dishes and cups which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple and which Belshazzar had so wickedly used at his feast.

On the journey the old people and the women and children rode on camels, some of the men were on horses and mules, though most of them walked. The baggage was carried by asses. Cyrus sent a thousand horsemen to protect them on their journey, for there were many robbers in the country through which they must pass.

As they started, they played on flutes and other instruments to show their joy. It was a long, long journey across the desert, but though they often became tired, they were very glad to know that they were really going back to their own land. As they travelled, they often sang some of the beautiful songs which David and others had written: one of these that I think they sang begins in this way:

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,"

(That is, when the Lord made us free.)

"We were like unto them that dream."

(That is, it seemed too good to be true, and as if we must be dreaming.)

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:

* * * * *

The Lord hath done great things for us ;
Whereof we are glad."

When they reached Jerusalem, the sight of this city which had once been so beautiful made them very sad, for it was all in ruins (that is, the rubbish of the burned buildings was scattered all over it). The people quickly put up some rough buildings in which they could live and then they built once more an altar in the court of the Temple, where one had stood in former days, that they might worship God. Then, just as Solomon had done when he built the beautiful Temple, they sent to Tyre to get great cedar trees of Lebanon, which were the finest in the world, and when they arrived, the carpenters began to build.

In the meantime the people had plowed the fields and sowed seed, and when the grain was ripe, they sent it to the Tyrians to pay for the trees. They cared for the vines and the olive trees, so they might have grapes and olives. Every one wished to help in building God's House, so they all freely gave their money and their work. When the ruins, or rubbish, of the old Temple had been carried away and the builders were ready to put the first stone in its place, the people all came together to sing and praise God. The priests in their white robes blew their silver

trumpets and others beat their brazen cymbals, while all the people joined in singing :

“ Praise the Lord, for He is good,
For His loving-kindness endureth forever towards Israel.”

The people were very happy because the new Temple was really begun and they shouted for joy.

As the Israelites who returned to their country lived only in Jerusalem and other cities in Judea, they were now always called Jews. Though they had been so happy when they began to build the Temple, they soon had very hard times, for the people who lived near Judea troubled them in many ways. These wicked neighbours sent false reports, or untrue stories, of them to the king of Babylon and hindered their work. But at last the Temple was finished. Do you not think that the Jews were glad when it was built? Yes, indeed, the Bible tells us that they dedicated, or gave, it to the Lord with great joy. They all came together and praised God because He had brought them back to their own land and had allowed them to build this Temple for Him.

After a time the people began to build the walls of Jerusalem, but their enemies, who had tried to keep them from building the Temple, again gave them trouble. They wrote a letter to Artaxerxes, who was now king of Babylon,

telling him that the Jews were building their walls, and that as soon as they had finished them, they would rebel against him and refuse to obey him. Artaxerxes believed the lies which these wicked men told him, and so he sent word that the Jews should not be allowed to build the walls of their city. When their enemies received this message from the king, they hastened to Jerusalem, and not only told the Jews that the king had commanded that they should stop building their walls, but they tore down the part that was already built.

LII

REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Nehemiah i; ii; iii; iv; vii: 1-4; xii: 27-43

Picture—REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

STORY

ARTAXERXES, the king of Persia and of Babylon, had his court at Susa, where Ahasuerus lived, you remember, with his beautiful queen Esther. A Jew named Nehemiah was the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes, that means that he stood by the king as he ate and poured wine into his goblet. This was a very high office and was given only to one whom the king honoured and trusted. Nehemiah had served the king faithfully for fifteen years and Artaxerxes thought very highly of him.

One day Nehemiah's brother and several other Jews, who had been in Jerusalem, came to see him and he asked them about that city and the Jews who were living there. They answered that the people were in great trouble; their walls, which they had begun to build, had been torn down and the gates burned. Thieves stole their property even during the day, and often at night women and children were carried away to be sold as slaves. When Nehemiah heard this

sad news, he wept. For several days he grieved so deeply over this great trouble that had come to his people that he did not even eat. He prayed to the dear heavenly Father and asked Him to forgive the sins which he and his people had committed and to put it into the king's heart to help him.

At the court no one looked sad, for the king liked to have only happy people about him. But Nehemiah had grieved so much over the trouble of his people that, though he tried to look cheerful, he could not keep the sadness out of his face. One day the king asked him, "Why do you look sad? You are not ill, so something must trouble you."

Nehemiah knew that the king's attendants were not allowed to look sad when with him, and he feared that he would be punished. He hesitated to speak about Jerusalem, for it was Artaxerxes who had said that the walls of this city could not be built. But in spite of his fear, he replied: "Let the king live forever. I cannot help being sad, because the city where my people lived lies in ruins and its gates are burned with fire."

Instead of being angry, the king kindly asked, "What is your request?" (that is, "For what do you wish?")

Before he answered, Nehemiah asked God to help him—he could not pray aloud but he talked

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to God in his heart. Then he answered, "If it please the king, wilt thou not send me to the city of my people that I may build it?"

The queen was sitting by the king and I think that she was sorry for Nehemiah and begged the king to let him go. Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah, "How long will the journey take and when will you return?"

When Nehemiah told him, the king said that he might go. Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah letters to the governors, through whose countries he would pass, telling them to protect him. He sent another letter, also, to the keeper of the king's forest, commanding him to give Nehemiah wood to build the gates of the city. Think how much Nehemiah loved Jerusalem, which had been the home of his people, when he was willing to leave his high position at the king's court to go and work hard there. He started as soon as possible upon his long journey, having with him many soldiers whom the king had sent to protect him.

When he reached Jerusalem, all the Jews there were very glad to see him. After he had rested from his journey two or three days, he started out one night with a few men and took a long, hard walk around the city, because he wished to know if the walls were really in ruins as he had heard. At first he rode on horseback but after a time he had to go on foot because his horse

could not climb over the heaps of stones and rubbish. The moon was shining and, by its light, he could see that all the walls were in ruins and that the gates were burned. He told no one that he was going to take this walk but the next day he called all the people together and said: "You see what great trouble we are in because the walls are in ruins and the gates burned. Come and let us build up the walls of Jerusalem that we may be safe and happy once more. This is God's city and He will help us, His children, to make it safe and beautiful again." Then he told them how God had been with him and had put it into the king's heart to let him come to help them.

All the people answered, "Let us start to build at once."

Nehemiah gave a certain part of the wall to each man, so that all could work together. And their names were to be written down, so that it might be known by whom the wall had been built. The high priest first offered to help, so Nehemiah asked him and the other priests to build the sheep-gate. This was the gate through which the shepherds led their flocks out to the pastures, and it was close to the Temple near which the priests lived. Others built that part of the wall near their homes and those who lived outside in the country worked on the part nearest their towns.

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There were many gates besides the sheep-gate; one was called the fish-gate because through it fish were brought into the city from the river Jordan. Another was called the valley gate, and still another the gate of the fountain. These and other gates and the towers, also, were rebuilt by different ones. Nobles and merchants, rich and poor all worked together. First they had to remove the rubbish and the broken stones with which the old wall had been built, then get the new stones ready and put them in place. The people worked hard and often became very tired, but they enjoyed working together.

When they began to build, their wicked neighbours at first laughed at them and said: "What are you trying to do? When you have built your wall, do you think you will be so strong that you need no longer serve Artaxerxes?"

Nehemiah answered: "The God of heaven will help us. We are His servants" (that is, "We serve Him") "and we will all do this work together."

As the walls began to rise, these wicked men laughed louder. One of them said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Do they expect to make a wall out of that rubbish?"

And another said, "Even a fox could break down their wall."

The Jews did not answer but went on building.

The Bible says they had a mind to work, that is, they worked with a will, because they wanted to finish the wall. When their wicked neighbours saw that they could not stop the Jews by laughing at them, they planned to come and fight them. But Nehemiah and the people prayed together to God to help them, and then Nehemiah chose men to watch all about the wall, both night and day, so they might give warning when the enemy came. And when the people were discouraged or afraid that they would be killed, brave Nehemiah said to them: "Be not afraid of them: remember that God is great and that He will help you. Fight bravely for your wives, your sons and daughters, and for your homes."

Nehemiah's words gave the people new courage and they went back to their work. Half of them built the wall and the other half stood with spears, shields and bows to protect them, if the enemy came. Even those who were building were armed, and each one worked on the wall with one hand, while in the other he held a weapon. Nehemiah walked about all the time, watching for the enemy, and a man with a trumpet went with him, for he had said to the people, "We are working far apart, but if you hear the trumpet, come quickly and God will help us fight."

Those who lived outside Jerusalem did not go back to their homes at night but remained in the

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city to help protect it and to be all ready to work each morning. Nehemiah and many others kept on their clothes, so they might be ready to fight day or night. When the enemy saw that they could not take the city by surprise, as it was so carefully watched, they did not come to fight against it.

In spite of all these hindrances, the wall was finished and each gate was hung in its place in just fifty-two days, or less than two months. Nehemiah chose his brother and another man, who was good and true, to guard the city and to see that the gates were closed every night. The people now gathered together and Ezra, a scribe (or writer) who had come from Babylon to help his people, read them God's laws, and they prayed to the Lord and asked Him to bless them.

Then they planned to dedicate the walls. All the Jews, men, women and children, came together, both those in the city and those whose homes were in other cities near Jerusalem. Nehemiah divided the people so that they might march in two great processions around the city on top of the walls, which were so wide that soldiers could fight upon them. He led one of these processions towards the north, while Ezra led the other towards the south. A great chorus followed the leader, in each procession, singing praises to God. Then came some of the priests and after them the rest of the people, while, last

of all, marched other priests singing, blowing silver trumpets, or playing upon cymbals, harps and other instruments.

After marching around on the walls, the two processions met near the Temple, and the people joined together in a song of praise and thanksgiving to God; because they could now be safe within the strong walls of their city. They were so happy that they shouted aloud for joy and these glad cries could be heard even to the distant hills which surrounded Jerusalem.

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